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G.S. PAPER II – GOVERNANCE, SOCIAL JUSTICE

ROLE OF CIVIL SERVICES IN A DEMOCRACY

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1. Introduction

In the process of governance, which involves several set of activities to deliver effective services to people, civil service plays a pivotal role in providing shape to policies that reflect people's needs and put their suggestive, analytical and informative roles to implement the policies. It is recognized that civil service plays a crucial role in all societies whether developed or developing. In the modern administrative state, public administration has become so significant that our development, upliftment and progress depend mainly upon the efficient functioning of public administration. Civil Services are the bedrock of public administration. Civil services have assumed more important role in democracy to ensure good governance, both in developing and developed countries.

Bureaucracy or civil services is an administrative body of officials whose roles are determined by written rules. It's an impersonal system operating on the basis of calculable rules and staffed by full time appointed officials. Weber identified the following characteristics of bureaucracy:

- Officers are organised in a clearly defined hierarchy of offices.
- Candidates are selected on the basis of technical qualifications.
- They are remunerated by fixed salaries in money.
- It constitutes a career. There is a system of 'promotion' according to seniority or to achievement or both.
- The official works entirely separated from ownership of the means of administration and without appropriation of his positions.
- Each office has a defined sphere of competence.
- The officials are personally free and subject to authority only with respect to their impersonal official obligations.

2. Importance of Civil Services in modern day democracy

A number of factors have contributed the increasing importance of civil service in modern day society:

- **The scientific and technological development:** They have led to revolutionary changes in transportation and communication system. The invention of telephone, telegraph, railways and airways has made big government and large scale administration possible.
- **Industrial revolution:** It brought about certain changes in society. It led to the growth of large scale industries and factory production, over-crowded industrial towns and urban slums. The factory system also resulted in certain evils such as growth of capitalism, large-scale unemployment, exploitation of labour etc. In the interest of socio-economic justice, governments in the developed and developing countries have to assume new responsibilities to set right the bad effects of the above evils. The tasks and responsibilities as well as the importance of civil service have thus vastly increased.
- **Economic Planning:** Modern governments have resorted to planning as a method of achieving economic development and goals of welfare state. The new responsibilities relating to planning activities, i.e., plan formulation and implementation and creation of elaborate necessary administrative machinery have naturally widened the scope of public administration. However, in the new liberalized economic reforms, planning as a method of economic development and the administrative functions relating to it are gradually getting diminished.
- **Calamities and crisis:** Natural calamities such as earthquakes, floods, droughts and cyclones have also enhanced the importance of civil services. In the event of occurrence of such natural calamities, the public administrators have to act quickly and undertake rescue operations in order to prevent loss of life and property of the affected people. Thus crisis management is an important function of public administration.
- **Population and the problems of metropolitan cities:** The rapid growth of population in almost all the countries of the world, especially in developing countries, has complicated the problems of providing food, shelter, education, health and sanitation etc. to the people. Also, the growth of metropolitan cities has

created certain problems peculiar to them. Some of the problems include congestion, growth of slums, housing scarcity, insufficient water supply, increasing urban crime rate etc. The responsibility for tackling these acute social and economic problems has resulted in the increase in the sphere of activity of civil service.

- **Emergence of welfare state:** As a welfare state, governments have to perform major functions such as dispenser of social services, a provider of essential commodities, a manager of key industries and banking services and a controller and regulator of private economic enterprises and activities. This has naturally increased the importance of civil service.

3. Role of civil services in governance

Civil services perform following important functions:

Basis of government: No government can exist without administrative machinery. All nations, irrespective of their system of government, require some sort of administrative machinery for implementing policies.

An instrument for implementing Laws and Policies: Civil services are responsible for implementing the laws and policies of government. By carrying out laws, it regulates the behaviour of the people in society. By implementing public policies and programmes, it delivers the promised goods and services to the intended beneficiaries. The ideals and objectives of government may be very popular, the plans for national development may be extremely progressive and the resources of the country may be abundant, but without civil services nothing can be achieved. An efficient civil service can avoid waste, correct errors; limit the consequences of incompetence or irresponsibility while implementing laws and public policies.

Participation in policy formulation: In modern world, civil service is the chief policy maker in government. It is a source of facts; experience; ideas and solution. Public administration participates in policy making by giving advice to ministers and providing them the necessary information. The administrative tasks of public bureaucracy include formulation of policies and plans, executing and monitoring programmes, laying down laws, rules and regulations, which affect human actions in almost all walks of life.

A great stabilizing force: Civil services acts as a stabilizing force in society. It settles social tensions and conflicts and thus creates social unity and harmony.

Provides continuity: Civil services carry on the governance when governments change due to elections etc. Ramsay Muir has remarked that while governments may come and go, ministers may rise and fall, the administration of a country goes on forever. It is needless to say that civil services form the backbone of administration.

An instrument of social change and economic development: The developing nations are mostly traditional and poor agricultural societies without adequate basic amenities of good life. These nations are struggling to achieve modernisation of society and economic development and realize welfare goals. The state is called upon to achieve these goals. These objectives have placed challenging tasks on public administration such as formulation of economic plans and their successful implementation to economic growth and social change. The accomplishment of these goals requires honest and competent civil servants.

Provides a wide variety of services in the public interest: Public administration run by civil servants provides a large number of services to the people such as:

- **Protective Functions:**
 - They protect the life and property of the people by **maintaining law and order**. The survival and progress of human beings depend on the proper enforcement of laws against lawbreakers.
 - In recent times, **protection of the environment** is added to the protective functions of the government. As a result of rapid industrialisation, there is the problem of environmental pollution

which threatens our lives and environmental pollution. Now almost all the governments are making efforts at the enhancement of environmental quality.

- **Facilitative services:** They provide facilitative services such as transportation, communications, and supply of power and so on.
- **Management of public enterprises:** Civil servants are managing public enterprises and public utilities in the interest of socio-economic justice. Public utilities are either publicly owned or strictly regulated in most countries. Government also imposes controls over private economic and business activities in the public interest.
- **Welfare services:** The welfare services provided for the people include social security, old age pensions, welfare of the weaker sections, poverty alleviation etc.
- **Developmental functions:** They perform a vital function of promoting agriculture, industry, internal and international trade, banking, insurance etc.

In addition to above, some other functions performed by civil service are as under:

- Assisting ministers in fulfilling their responsibilities towards the parliament and its committees.
- Handling financial operations of the state.
- Reforming and improving administration through O and M (i.e. organization and methods)
- Administrative adjudication: This is a quasi-judicial function performed by the civil service. The civil servants settle disputes between the citizens and the state. For this purpose, the Administrative Tribunals, with civil servants as judges are established. For example: The Income Tax Appellate Tribunal

4. Role of civil services in developing countries

Civil services in a developing society like India play a very important role. It performs the following functions:

Role in socio-economic development

The governments of developing countries have the huge responsibility to bring about all-round development of their societies. Several programmes have been launched to this end by the respective governments. Major functions of the civil services are:

- To develop agriculture, civil servants have to properly manage community resources such as land, water resources, forests, wetlands and wasteland development.
- To facilitate industrial development, infrastructural facilities such as roads, electricity, communications, market centres etc have to be provided. In these countries, the civil service manages government owned business, industrial enterprises and public utility services.

Besides, civil service has to perform following functions in relation to developmental activities:

- Setting right developmental goals and priorities for agriculture, industry, education, health, communications etc.
- Formulation and implementation of strategies and programmes for the development and modernisation of the nation.
- Mobilisation of natural, human and financial resources and their proper utilization for accomplishing developmental objectives.
- Development of human resources to secure the necessary managerial skills and technical competence to carry out the developmental tasks.
- Creation of new administrative organisations and improving the capacity of the existing ones for the developmental purposes.

- Securing the support of the people for developmental activities by involving them in the process of development by creating appropriate attitude towards the socio-economic changes that are taking place in society.
- Promotion of clean and green environment and protection of human rights.

Developing a sense of nationhood

Several divisive forces such as communal and ethnic conflicts, caste feuds and regional rivalries often threaten the national unity. In order to develop a sense of nationhood among the people of these countries, the civil servants have to resolve the sub-national and sub-cultural differences among the people.

Facilitating democracy

The civil servants play a vital role in maintaining the democratic ideals by assisting their political heads (Ministers) in policy-making function and in implementing the policies made. Since developing countries are new to the democratic institutions, it is only the stable and efficient civil service that can strengthen the democracy.

5. Civil Services in India

In parliamentary system, it is the political executive (responsible to the legislature) who determines policies and programmes of government. The implementation and administration of these policies and programmes is the responsibility of the civil servants who, by virtue of their training and professional experience, are well-versed in the actual functioning of government.

An important characteristic of the civil service system in India is classification based on the concept of the 'Service'. Under this concept, civil service posts are grouped into distinct homogenous cadres under a common Service named on the basis of specific functions attached to the posts in question.

The various Civil Services at the Union and State levels can be classified in different ways. **Firstly**, the Civil Services can be categorized into three broad groups – Central Civil Services, All India Services and the State Civil Services. The Central Services function under the Union Government and are generally engaged in administering subjects which are assigned to the Union under the Constitution. All India Services are common to the Union and the States and the State Services function only under the State Governments. **Secondly**, the Union and State Services can be classified into Group A, B and C categories based on their role and responsibilities. **Thirdly**, these services can also be classified into technical and non-technical services.

6. Some of the observations of 2nd ARC regarding civil services in India:

It is widely recognised that the civil services have contributed to stability in terms of maintenance of peace, the conduct of fair elections, managing disasters and the preservation of the unity of the nation, providing stability and maintaining order in a vast country prone to various conflicts – ethnic, communal, regional etc. Nonetheless there are certain concerns about the performance of the civil service in the context of realizing a results-oriented government. Some of them are:

- It has been pointed out that the Civil Service in India is more concerned with the internal processes than with results.
- The systemic rigidities, needless complexities and over-centralization in the policy and management structures within which the civil service functions are too complex and often too constraining.
- The structures are based on hierarchies and there are a large number of veto points to be negotiated for a decision to eventually emerge.

- To compound it, the size and the number of ministries and departments have both overloaded the decision-making system and diminished the capacities of the individual civil servants to fulfill their operational responsibilities.
- Rapid and fundamental changes are taking place in the country in terms of rapid economic growth, urbanization, environmental degradation, technological change and increased local awareness and identity. The response time to adapt to these changes is much shorter than it used to be. As instruments of public service, civil servants have to be ready to manage such change.
- On the other hand, the perception is that they resist change as they are wedded to their privileges and prospects and thereby have become ends in themselves.
- The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution have brought about a major change. Rural and urban local governments have to be enabled to become institutions of self government. To bring this about, the existing system of administration at the district level has to undergo fundamental changes. Though sixteen years have passed, the progress remains very slow and local governments are 'local' only in 'form' but are 'central and state in content'.
- With the passage of time, the role of civil society organisations, in governance, has increased with demands for better governance. The same can be said of the private sector, which is increasingly providing services in several areas, which hitherto were the exclusive preserve of the public sector. Consequently, civil servants should view civil society organisations and the private sector as partners in the process of the country's governance.
- There is need to shift from pre-eminence of governance to effective governance with a focus on decentralization and citizen-centricity.

7. Conflicts between civil services and democracy

- Rigid organization structures and cumbersome procedures
- Elitist, authoritarian, conservative outlook
- Men in bureaucracy fulfill segmental roles over which they have no control. Consequently, they have little or no opportunity to exercise individual judgment.
- The requirement that a bureaucrat should follow the principles of consistency and regularity automatically limits his capacity to adapt to changing circumstances.
- The general rules which may take for overall efficiency produce inefficiency and injustice in individual cases.
- Civil services' difficulty to cope with uncertainty and change is a key limit on its efficiency.

8. Reforms needed in civil services

Broad Reforms:

- The development work needs some flexibility from a strict observance of rigid rules and regulations. Rigid rule bound bureaucracies should be changed into flexible and action-oriented.
- Reforms are required in the field of recruitment of civil servants so that right people could be recruited who can ensure smooth functioning of democracy.
- Training of civil servants should be able to bring about behavioural and attitudinal changes.
- Administrative procedures, rules and regulations need to be simplified so that red tapism could be minimized; decentralization of authority and collegiate decision making; de-emphasis of hierarchy in the administrative structure
- Adoption of modern management techniques such as management by objectives; elimination of corruption so as to secure clean, honest, impartial and efficient administration; creation of new work culture and encouraging creativity.

Summary of Recommendations: 2nd ARC's 10th Report

- A National Institutes of Public Administration should be established to run Bachelor's Degree courses in public administration/ governance/management. Selected Central and other Universities should also be assisted to offer graduate level programmes in these courses which will produce graduates to further expand the pool of eligible applicants to the civil services. These graduates would be eligible for appearing in the Civil Services Examinations. Further, graduates in other disciplines would also be eligible to appear in the Civil Services Examination provided they complete a 'Bridge Course' in the core subjects mentioned above.
- **Structure of Examination:** Either of the following two models may be adopted for compressing the examination cycle.
 - The Preliminary and Main Examinations for the Civil Services Examination would be conducted together on two to three consecutive days. Evaluation of papers for the Main Examination should be done in case of only those candidates who have secured a threshold level of marks in the Preliminary Examination. The personality test would follow thereafter.
 - OR
 - Based on the results of the Preliminary Examination, candidates eligible for taking the main examination and the personality test would be short listed in accordance with their rankings. Only these short-listed candidates would be eligible for appearing in the Main Examination, which would be conducted within two months of the Preliminary Examination. The short list would be limited to about two to three times of the number of vacancies available. Thus it would be possible to start the Personality Test and the Main Examination almost simultaneously.
- The induction of officers of the State Civil Services into the IAS should be done by the UPSC on the basis of a common examination.
- In the case of disciplinary proceedings, consultation with the UPSC should be mandatory only in cases involving likely dismissal or removal of a government servant.
- **Capacity Building**
 - Every government servant should undergo a mandatory training at the induction stage and also periodically during his/her career. Successful completion of these trainings should be a minimum necessary condition for confirmation in service and subsequent promotions.
 - A monitoring mechanism should be set up for overseeing the implementation of the National Training Policy (1996).
 - The objective of mid-career training should be to develop domain knowledge and competence required
 - Public servants should be encouraged to obtain higher academic qualifications and to write papers for reputed and authoritative journals.
 - The composition of governing bodies of the national training institutions such as the LBSNAA, SVPNPA, IGNTA and also the State Administrative Training Institutes should be broadened by inducting eminent experts.
 - A National Institute of good governance may be set up by upgrading one of the existing national/state institutes. This institute would identify, document, and disseminate best practices and also conduct training programmes

Recommendations of some other committees:

A number of Committees and Commissions were set up to make recommendations on various aspects of civil services. These recommendations are included in the Report on Public Administration by **A.D. Gorwala**, 1951; Report on the Public Services (Qualifications for Recruitment) Committee, 1956 – also known as **Dr. A. Ramaswami Mudaliar** Committee Report; Report on Indian and State Administrative Services and Problems of District Administration by **V.T. Krishnamachari**, 1962; ARC's Report on Personnel Administration, 1969; Report of the

Committee on Recruitment Policy and Selection Methods, 1976 – also known as the **D.S. Kothari Committee Report**; Report of the Committee to Review the Scheme of the Civil Services Examination, 1989 – also known as the **Satish Chandra Committee Report**; Report of the Civil Services Examination Review Committee, 2001, also known as **Professor Yoginder K. Alagh Committee Report**; Report of the Committee on Civil Service Reforms also known as the **Hota Committee Report**, 2004.

Few of the relevant recommendations of recent committees are given below.

Recruitment

- The Civil Services Examination Review Committee, 2001 (chaired by Professor **Yoginder K. Alagh**) favored testing the candidates in a common subject rather than on optional subjects.
- The Committee on Civil Service Reforms (**Hota Committee Report**, 2004) recommended that aptitude and leadership tests may be introduced for selection, and that probationers may be allowed one month's time after commencement of training to exercise their option for Services.

Training

- The Committee to Review In-Service Training of IAS officers, (**Yugandhar Committee**, 2003) recommended the need for three mid-career training programmes in the 12th, 20th and 28th years of service. Trainings at these 3 stages was suggested as there is a "major shift" in the nature of work of the officer, at these stages of their career.

Domain Expertise

- The **first ARC** classified higher civil service posts into two categories: posts in the field, and (b) posts at headquarters.
- The field posts were held by the members of the 'functional' services which included not only the various engineering services but also services such as accounts and income tax. The first ARC noted that the only service that was not functional but occupied most of the higher posts in the civil services was the IAS. The first ARC recommended that the IAS should be converted into a functional service.
- Consistent with its philosophy of organizing the administrative machinery along functional lines and inducting talent from all sources, the ARC recommended eight broad areas of specialization: Economic Administration; Industrial Administration; Agricultural and Rural Development Administration; Social and Educational Administration; Personnel Administration; Financial Administration; Defence Administration and Internal Security Planning.
- The Report of the Group constituted to Review the System of Performance Appraisal, Promotion, Empanelment and Placement for the All India Services and other Group 'A' Services (**Surinder Nath Committee Report**, 2003) suggested the following 11 domains - Agriculture and Rural Development; Social Sectors (Education, Health, Tribal Welfare, etc.); Culture and Information; Natural Resources Management including Environment (green side); Energy and Environment (brown side); Communication Systems and Connectivity Infrastructure; Public Finance and Finance Management; Industry and Trade; Domestic Affairs and Defence; Housing and Urban Affairs; Personnel and General Administration. The Committee suggested that officers may be assigned to a maximum of three domains out of the eleven listed.
- **The Hota Committee** on Civil Services Reforms, 2004, had recommended that domain assignment should be introduced for civil servants to encourage acquisition of skills, professional excellence and career planning.

Efficiency

There has been a succession of Committees that were asked to recommend measures for increasing the efficiency of the civil services.

- **The Appleby Report** (1953) contained recommendations relating to the establishment of O&M machinery and an Institute of Public Administration. These two recommendations were implemented by Government.
- The **Fifth Central Pay Commission** (2000) stressed upon the need to optimise the size of the government machinery.
- **The Expenditure Reforms Commission** (2001) emphasised on a drastic downsizing of the government staff strength for securing modern and professional governance and also reducing the increasing salary bill of the Government of India.
- The Committee on Civil Services Reforms (**Hota Committee**, 2004) emphasised the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to transform Government by making it more accessible, effective and accountable. It stressed on the need to recognise that e-governance is about discarding old procedures and transforming the process of decision making and that technology is merely a tool and a catalyst for such transformations.

Accountability

- The Committee on Prevention of Corruption (**Santhanam Committee**) made a range of recommendations to fight the menace of corruption. It recommended the constitution of the Central Vigilance Commission, and administrative vigilance divisions in all Departments and major organizations of the Government. Changes were also suggested in Article 311 of the Constitution of India for conducting disciplinary proceedings against government servants. It was also recommended that offering of bribes should be made a substantive offence.
- The **first ARC** recommended that the departments and organizations which were in direct charge of development programmes should introduce performance budgeting. The ARC also recommended the establishment of two special institutions, the Lok Pal to deal with complaints against the administrative acts of Ministers and Secretaries to the government at the Centre and the Lok Ayuktas to deal with such complaints in States.
- **The Hota Committee** recommended that Sections 13 (1) (d) and 19 of the Prevention of Corruption Act and Section 197 of the Code of Criminal Procedure may be amended to protect honest civil servants from malicious prosecution and harassment. It also recommended that a Code of Ethics should be drawn up for civil servants incorporating the core values of integrity, merit and excellence in public service. Another recommendation of the Hota Committee was that each department should lay down and benchmark services to be delivered, methods of grievance redressal and public evaluation of performance. It also recommended that a Model Code of Governance should be drawn up benchmarking the standards of governance to be made available to the citizens.

Performance Appraisal

- The Report of the Group constituted to review the system of Performance Appraisal, Promotion, Empanelment and Placement of the AIS and Other Services (**Surinder Nath Committee**, 2003) recommended that - performance appraisal should be primarily used for the overall development of an officer and for his/her placement in an area where his/her abilities and potential can be best used.
- Only those who can demonstrate a credible record of actual performance and possess the necessary knowledge and skills required for higher responsibilities should be promoted. There is no benefit in retaining officers who lack demonstrated competence, or who are unqualified, or of doubtful moral or financial integrity or who are in unacceptably poor health.
- **The Hota Committee** on Civil Services Reforms, 2004, recommended replacing the ACR with a system of performance assessment in which greater emphasis is placed on objective assessment against agreed work plans.

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