

Role of Bureaucracy in India

In a democratic state, Ministers are generally not matured administrators. Most of them do not know anything about the administrative process and also the administrative details. Similarly, most of them cannot carry on the administration, even of their own departments, without the help of civil servants. The government may change and if the permanent administrators are not there, the whole administrative system will receive a serious set back. That is why the administrative machinery is generally set up and the important departments are manned by the civil servants. They remain in touch with all the policies and have experts' knowledge of the working of the departments. Naturally a civil servant is supposed to aid and advise the Minister in an honest manner so that the inexperienced Minister may not be guided by his whims or by his own likes and dislikes.

Recently, it has come to notice that civil servants are sometimes nothing more than puppets in the hands of the Ministers. They carry out the orders of the Ministers whether those are right or wrong. Many a time they are threatened with dire consequences and they are made to do certain things which are not in the public interest. For example, during Emergency a number of officers were responsible for Emergency excesses simply because they wanted to win the favour the people in power. If this becomes universal the country is doomed to destruction. The larger interests of the common man will be in danger.

If we examine the working of the government closely, we will find that the top bureaucrats directly or indirectly are the real policy-makers. They formulate recommendations for every policy-decision that the Government may announce. They support one or more alternative policies based on their experience so that they may approve it on the basis of their ideologies. Sometimes they may also be required to work for the policy enunciated by the political executive without consulting them. Even when the policies are formulated by the political executive, details are worked out by the bureaucrats. It is seen that the bureaucrats may become either tools in the hands of the political leaders or their guides. In a developing country where the leaders have no political maturity, it is necessary that the bureaucrats should safeguard democracy against the authoritarian tendencies of the people in power. They should serve as an effective check upon the arbitrary use of power by the politicians. If bureaucracy becomes subservient to political executive it can conspire to bring the downfall of democracy and installation of dictatorship in the country. With the help of bureaucracy even the most democratic country can be changed into a dictatorial one, if the real power of bureaucracy is lost. If they have to fritter away their energies, they may get lost

in the labyrinth of recommendations and suggestions. The citizens may find themselves helpless, after electing their political representatives, at least for a period of five years, until they have the right to recall them. Under such circumstances an over-enthusiastic elected representative may adopt extremist policy which may go against the interests of the citizens. Bureaucracy should try to moderate the extremist programmes and it should work to weaken the programmes which are against the common citizens or strengthen those by which the common man would be benefited. It can be achieved by bureaucracy by providing suitable inputs and feed-back to the political executive. This productive role has not been recognized in India so far. Even if India has to wage a war on socio-economic, cultural and political fronts, it should do through bureaucracy which should not be passive or neutral. Some may think that this type of role will give some extra-constitutional powers to the bureaucrats. But it is wrong to think so. In fact it is the duty of every citizen including bureaucrats to safeguard the Constitution. Moreover, bureaucrats take an oath of office to this effect so he owes allegiance to the Constitution as well as to the country and so to the people.

Moreover, the Constitution of India unlike the constitution of United States makes a special provision to safeguard the existence, continuity and independence of bureaucracy in Articles 309 to 312. The framers of the Constitution wanted that the bureaucrats may be free from political persecution and intimidation. As the existence and continuity of bureaucracy is an important constitutional provision, the bureaucrats should not play the role of subservience to the political executive. So the bureaucrats in India should not succumb to intimidation, to cowardly toeing and to the extremist line of a particular state organ. It seems it is the sheer inertia that has made the Indian bureaucracy to continue with the legacy inherited from the British Raj. Indian bureaucrats are in a better position because their rights are guaranteed by the Constitution. The American bureaucrat has to grope in the dark and make his own assessment of the prevailing culture and the wishes of the American people. The British bureaucrats willy nilly have to accept the dictates of the party in power, which directly changes as per wishes of the people. But Indian bureaucracy can seek guidance from the Directive Principles of State Policy enshrined in the Indian Constitution, unless he can find social material to guide him in the propagation, formulation, selection and execution of policies. In order to follow this course of action, bureaucracy will have to reorient itself.

Another role which Indian bureaucracy must play is to bring about the social changes in the country otherwise society will remain static. But if the society is allowed to grow according to its own internal affairs, the growth might not be purposive and beneficial. The wild growth of a society may bring cracks in the political and economic system. So as we plan for the growth of economy, we plan

for the growth of society also. The growth should not be left to the social leaders of the society because they are generally the product of the tradition and culture. For example, our culture is steadily grafted with the western culture and it will be foolishness for us to allow it to grow as it likes to grow. By embodying some social changes in the political decisions and by executing the policies, by keeping the social life in view one can definitely bring proper changes in the society. Much depends upon the bureaucrats in this respect also. It is wrong to think that a bureaucrat is concerned only with the general policy and the execution of that policy, rather he is responsible for developing the society in the right direction. So the Indian bureaucrats who have been under fire because of their ugly role during Emergency should try to reconstruct their image in the public eye. In fact they hold more exalted and responsible position than the political leaders. The interests of the political leaders are always guided by political consideration, whereas the interests of the civil servant depend upon his commitment to the society as a whole. So the role of a bureaucrat in a democratic society is larger, more complicated, demanding integrity and honesty of purpose which imply detachment and unselfish approach.