

HUMAN VALUES AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN POLITICS AND ADMINISTRATION IN INDIA: AN INSIGHT

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Administration means not only the public administration but it includes also all activities of the government set up undertaken to provide social, economic, defence and other services to the citizens for their all round development, protection and peaceful living. It is required to have capability to acquire the changes in society for the welfare of the citizens. Its successes and failures depend upon execution of plans and programmes by its agencies and institutions. A good plan can be successful only with clean, effective and impartial administration. A large number of public servants and functionaries are involved at different levels of administration to meet the demands of people and to check their conduct is a difficult task. We see that influences exercised by political parties, pressure groups and other lobbies affect the duties and responsibilities of the administration. There is huge problem to maintain the moral standards and human values in the conduct of public affairs in democratic setup of Indian administration. As the character, credibility and future of the government depends upon ethics and fulfilment of the social responsibilities by the public servants hence it is the first duty of the centre as well as state governments to provide a clean administration by inculcating the ethics and human values in their administration.

The paper highlights values, ethics and mortality, objectives of administration, politics, bureaucracy And social responsibility of Indian political administration.

Introduction

Administration means not only the public administration but it includes also all activities of the government set up undertaken to provide social, economic, defence and other services to the citizens for their all round development, protection and peaceful living. It is required to have capability to acquire the changes in society for the welfare of the citizens. Its successes and failures depend upon execution of plans and programmes by its agencies and institutions. A good plan can be successful only with clean, effective and impartial administration. A large number of public servants and functionaries are involved at different levels of administration to meet the demands of people and to check their conduct is a difficult task. We see that influences exercised by political parties, pressure groups and other lobbies affect the duties and responsibilities of the administration. There is huge problem to maintain the moral standards and human values in the conduct of public affairs in democratic setup of Indian administration. As the character, credibility and future of the government depends upon ethics and fulfilment of the social responsibilities by the public servants hence it is the first duty of the centre as well as state governments to provide a clean administration by inculcating the ethics and human values in their administration.

Values, Ethics and Morality

Ethics ensure outer desired behaviours. They include the disciplined actions of the doers under given compulsions, apparently meeting the requirements. But they may be broken the moment these compulsions are no more. However, if sound values are inculcated within, the actions become voluntary, spontaneous and self motivated. Naturally, such actions will be much more effective, humane and wholesome in nature. Values are concerned with the character and conduct of a person. Values also evaluate the actions of the person with reference to their being good or bad, right or wrong. We can also say that values are the moral principles of the individuals. There are certain human actions which are accepted as universal human values such as honesty, integrity, forgiveness, gratitude, non-violence etc. The traits of a person guide him to become good or bad. The traits which we consider desirable in the society make him good and which undesirable make him destructive, arrogant, greedy and angry. Undesirable traits lead him to work against established values, on the other hand desirable traits lead him to act positively i.e. to act for humanity and not for self alone.

Objectives of Administration

The twin objectives of any administrative control device may be (i) to make administration free from corruption and maladministration and (ii) to make it responsive to the wishes of the people. Both these objectives, if minutely observed are the two faces of the same coin. These can, in concrete terms, be achieved if the citizens get opportunity to ventilate their grievances against administrators and administrative agencies and get them redressed and right to level allegations against them and get the wrong doers apprehended, punished or corrected¹. The question of maintaining the ethical values was also before Mahatama Gandhi in pre independence era when he received the complaints of corruption in public affairs by his party-fellows and had stated 'I would go to the length of giving the whole congress a decent burial, rather than put up with the corruption that is rampant.'² The matter of purity and honesty in public life was also discussed in the Indian constituent assembly, before drafting the Constitution. During the debate on appointment of Prime Minister and Council of Ministers, it was suggested by many members that there must be a provision to disclose the properties, shares and titles in business by the Members of Parliament. It was also suggested that persons found guilty of any offence involving moral turpitude should not be allowed to hold any public office³. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar summed up the debate with words 'people of India are interested to see that the government administration must maintain high standards of ethics and morality'⁴. The Preamble of the Indian Constitution also focuses on human values and social responsibilities by declaring: 'We the people of India having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic, Republic and to secure its citizens; justice, social, economic and political...'⁵

Politics, bureaucracy and Social Responsibility

The things like justice, clean administration, ethical values and social responsibilities remained in existence only for two or three decades after the independence. Then a new class of politicians entered in politics. The sole aim of this class was to earn money and power by hook or crook. These politicians and other influential persons started interfering in the day to day functioning of the civil administration with their influence, money and muscle power. They started to take illegal benefits from the administration and to exercise the illegal practices e.g. corruption and nepotism for their financial gains. These practices of elite class have been prevailing till this date and the people of India are feeling aggrieved, though their unawareness, less education and

less co-ordination are also root causes for the above situation. The report of second commission on administrative reforms noted that ‘Perhaps the most important determinant of the integrity of a society or the prevalence of corruption is the quality of politics. If politics attracts and rewards men and women of integrity, competence and passion for public good, then the society is safe and integrity is maintained. But if honesty is incompatible with survival in politics, and if public life attracts undesirable and corrupt elements seeking private gain, then abuse of authority and corruption become the norm’⁶. In our country we find illegal and corrupt practices in every sphere of life. There is low morale, favouritism, casteism, nepotism and bribery in every office and institution of the government. Most of the private sector is prone to apply illegal methods to save the income tax and other taxes levied by the government administration. Though the law of land does not permit these things but we find a big gap in law and its enforcement i.e. in theories and practice. This contradiction in belief and action give pains and sufferings to the citizens. They feel tension and stress due to undesirable behave of the agents and employees of administration. The main agent of the government that formulate the policies and execute plans for it, is bureaucracy. ‘The enormous expansion of public service has lead to the expansion of bureaucracy. This has also resulted in the multiplication of the administrative processes whereby administrative power and discretion are vested at different levels of the executive.’⁷ Santhanam Committee reported ‘where there are power and discretion there always a possibility of their abuse in terms of maladministration and corruption.’⁸ After the independence the bureaucracy has not played its role well. Rather it became an instrument of some mighty, arrogant and self-centred corrupt politicians in providing by them a non-transparent and bad administration. ‘The bureaucracy can create bottlenecks in the economic and political development through red-tapism, heartless attitudes and narrowly conceived actions. A political system therefore needs an ideal efficient and workable bureaucracy to achieve political development.’⁹

Materialistic approach of Society

The conduct rule of government servants also gives a general rule that they should not do anything which is unbecoming of a government servant. Though we have very skilled people in the administration but decline in values system is deteriorating the situation and resulting in unhappiness, insecurity and tensions in minds of the general public. Our constitution and religious books are containing codes and directions on

values and ethics to be followed by citizens/humans as well as the states but the materialistic goals are now upsetting our old age value system. Every person of the society is now eager to prosper in the shortest period of time by adopting illegal and wrong means. The material prosperity has become glamour to the society and the persons with values of simplicity, honesty, hard work and character building seem cheated in this atmosphere.

Administrative Reforms

Many efforts through legislations and through other modes were made by the government to set its record straight but due to lack of will the situation never improved. The Santhanam Committee, which was appointed in 1962 for administrative reforms, observed that honesty and integrity of ministers, parliament members and members of legislatures are important factors in creating social awareness against corruption¹⁰. Again in 1968 a Lokpal Bill was introduced in the parliament. Though it failed but it created awareness in masses for clean governance. For the first time in 1997 an Ethics Committee (Rajaya Sabha) was constituted in India to study the causes of erosion of morality and social values in administration and to suggest the measures/ ethics to build the confidence of people in the governance. This committee stated in the opening paras of its report in reference to public servants that 'By and large, the ideological base and the spirit of service which should activate most of them is getting eroded and the kind of elements who are trying to influence the political parties and the political system at large, make everybody think as to how probity in the entire system could be ensured. There may be many ways for ensuring probity in public life, but a self-disciplining mechanism, appears to be the best in an institution like Parliament.'¹¹ Now again in 2011 the question of good governance and ethical values in politics is being debated in parliament, media and peoples' forum. The ailment of corruption in the administration is being condemned everywhere. The centre government is going to introduce Lokpal and Judicial Accountability Bill to curb the menace of corruption and nepotism. The Right to Information Act has already been introduced for transparency in governance. There is a big hope that the centre as well as state governments would take more steps to provide good and clean governance as per their constitutional responsibility. 'The professed aim of government, its form or label, has always been the service of the people it governs. The people's satisfaction has been the bed-rock of its stability. Disregard for people's satisfaction leads initially to an

attitude of ambivalence, then to alienation and finally to breaking point, revolt.’¹² Though the situation is yet not well but one could hope that with the implementation of some effective measures some ethical norms would re-enter in the administration to perform its administrative and social responsibilities. In addition to this we also have to bring the ethical and moral values in our day to day life and unite against the unethical and illegal practices prevailing in our administration as well as in society. Shri Anna Hazare also gave a birth to peoples’ movement to make India free from corruption which has sensitized public opinion against this evil. This is a good note that people have willingly come forward to support the cause. We should remember the words of Father of our Nation. Writing in Young India on 6 December 1928, Gandhiji stated, ‘Corruption will be out one day, however much one may try to conceal it, and the public can, as it is its right and duty in every case of justifiable suspicion, call its servants to strict account, dismiss them, sue them in a law court, or appoint an arbitrator or inspector to scrutinize their conduct, as it likes.’

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