

## Module 7 Bureaucracy

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# Chapter I

## Evolution and Meaning

The term 'bureaucracy' has its origin in the French practice in the Seventeenth century when ministers maintained 'bureau' of officials to help them in administration. Because of frequent change of ministers, the officers became the main policy makers and the bureaucracy thus became autonomous. Bureaucracy is a part of the executive branch of government constituted of full-time officials. They are professionals trained to deal with the internal problems of the state. The military, on the other hand, is responsible for guarding the boundaries of the state against external threats. A distinction is made between the 'civil' and the 'military' from this point of view.

The bureaucracy has evolved into an autonomous structure of government as a necessary part of the executive. Being a body of professional administrators; the members of the bureaucracy are expected to function in a non-political and non-partisan manner. Once a decision is taken by the political executive and a law is passed by the legislature (which is also a political body), the bureaucracy is expected to implement them in a non-political manner.

Though the evolution of bureaucracy can be traced to the different stages of the development of modern state, the theory of bureaucracy was propounded clearly by writers in the twentieth century. The most well-known of these theories is that of Max Weber.

According to Max Weber, "Bureaucracy is universal social phenomenon and the means of carrying community action to rationally ordered societal action." In the words of Marshall E. Dimock, "Bureaucracy is the state of the society in which institutions overshadow individuals and simple family relationships, stage of development in which division of labour, specialization, organisation, hierarchy, planning and regimentation of large groups of individuals either by voluntary or non-voluntary methods, are the order of the day."

Bureaucracy is said to be the product of a large size of organizations in public or private service. The bureaucratic administration breaks the absolute power of elected leadership or monarchy due to its systematised administration. As a system, it has to practice autonomy and independence in giving its opinion to political leaders and has to faithfully execute the formulated policies. Hans Rosenberg has observed that "...an essential part of the present structure of governance consists of its far – flung system of professionalised administration and its hierarchy of appointed officials upon whom the society is thoroughly dependent. Whether we live under the most totalitarian despotism or in the most liberal democracy, we are governed to a considerable extent by a bureaucracy of some kind."

Herman Finer says that bureaucracy is a "professional body of officials, permanent, paid and skilled." Arthur K. Davis looked at bureaucracy from the structural point of view. To him, bureaucracy is "an integrated hierarchy of specialised offices defined by systematic rules, an impersonal, routinized structure wherein legitimized authority rests in the office and not in the person of the incumbent." Bureaucracy is a system of administration under which all the employees are organised into a hierarchy of offices, each with well – defined spheres of duties and responsibilities.

Bureaucracy as a concept is used to characterize non – governmental and private organizations also. Writers like Peter M. Blau and Alvin W. Gouldner argue that bureaucratization is a process which is found in organizations that experience certain changes in their form and structure. Many organizations develop the characteristics of bureaucracy as they grow in size. Bigger organizations often have characteristics of a bureaucracy.

The concept of bureaucracy refers to the 'ideal type' of an organisation, i.e. the manner in which they should work. But in actual practice, the working of bureaucracy is not always in the best interest of the organisation or the society in whose interest it is supposed to function. Writers argue that the characteristics of the 'ideal type' bureaucracy often cancel out the qualities of each other and result in a rigid and unimaginative way of working. Let us examine this line of argument. The graded career, promotions on the basis of seniority and fixed rate of increment in salaries generates lack of initiative and conservatism in its functioning. The bureaucrats are content with the existing situations in society and the government, and often resist innovations. Impersonal behaviour of bureaucrats creates a sense of aloofness, where the performance of set

functions gets precedence over satisfaction of the clients. Strict rules and regulations are given importance in the bureaucracy. But, these rules and regulations, after all, are made so that the organisation works in the best manner and in the interest of the people in whose interest the organisation is supposed to function. The rules and regulations are for the attainment of certain goals. In its working, adherence to rules and regulations become the primary goals, irrespective of the considerations of their consequences. Bureaucracy adheres rigidly to the rules and regulations in an unimaginative and inflexible manner. Robert K. Merton calls it 'displacement of goals', where the secondary goals gain importance, without caring for the primary goals of efficiency in organisation and satisfaction of the clients.

Bureaucracy these days is often associated with negative characteristics like red-tapism, delay, rigid adherence to rules and regulations and unsympathetic attitude of officials. Government departments and government officials are often accused of negative connotations of bureaucracy.

The meaning of 'bureaucracy' will become further clear by briefly discussing its major characteristics.

### ***Major Characteristics of Bureaucracy***

**Hierarchy:** In a bureaucracy, activities based on specialization are assigned to specific positions. There is a clear – cut division of work, competence, authority, responsibility and other job components. Each lower office is under the control and supervision of the higher office. Officials are accountable to their superiors for their official actions.

**Professional Qualities:** All officials possess professional qualities on the basis of which they are selected for appointment. Their merit for selection is determined on the basis of objective criteria. They deal in an impersonal and formalistic manner in their relations with others and also in the execution of their official duties. They enjoy a permanent career with reasonable opportunities of advancement with sufficient security of service.

**Rules and Procedures:** In bureaucracy, decisions are governed by a consistent system of abstract rules, regulations and procedures. Officials' behaviour is to follow definite rules of conduct and discipline. The use of

authority has to be in accordance with the regulations of the organisation, which are written and tend to be rational and impersonal.

**Specialization:** Official tasks are organised on a continuous regulated basis. These tasks are subdivided into functionally distinct spheres, each furnished with the requisite authority and sanctions. This functional specificity leads to specialization of tasks.

**Organizational Resources:** The resources of the organisation are quite distinct from those of the members who are private individuals. It means that officials do not own resources necessary for performing the official duties, but they are accountable for the use of official resources. Official revenue and private incomes are strictly separated.

Max Weber argued that these characteristics would result into an efficient organisation. These characteristics define the bureaucracy in an 'ideal type' manner.

### *Principles and elements*

According to max Weber, a bureaucratic organization is governed by the following seven principles:

1. official business is conducted on a continuous basis
2. official business is conducted with strict accordance to the following rules:
  - the duty of each official to do certain types of work is delimited in terms of impersonal criteria
  - the official is given the authority necessary to carry out his assigned functions
  - the means of coercion at his disposal are strictly limited and conditions of their use strictly defined
3. every official's responsibilities and authority are part of a vertical hierarchy of authority, with respective rights of supervision and appeal
4. officials do not own the resources necessary for the performance of their assigned functions but are accountable for their use of these resources

5. official and private business and income are strictly separated
6. offices cannot be appropriated by their incumbents (inherited, sold, etc.)
7. official business is conducted on the basis of written documents

A bureaucratic official, as per Weber:

- is personally free and appointed to his position on the basis of conduct
- exercises the authority delegated to him in accordance with impersonal rules, and his loyalty is enlisted on behalf of the faithful execution of his official duties
- appointment and job placement are dependent upon his technical qualifications
- administrative work is a full-time occupation
- work is rewarded by a regular salary and prospects of advancement in a lifetime career

Carl J. Friedrich classified the six elements of bureaucracy into functional and behavioral categories. The first refers to the functions that are to be performed and the second refers to the habit or behaviour that is desirable in members of the bureaucracy. Centralization of control and supervision, differentiation of functions and defining qualification for recruitment to the bureaucratic cadres are the functional elements. Objectively, precision, consistency and discretion refer to the ideal behaviour or attitude of the members of the bureaucracy.

### ***Development of Civil Services in India***

Shri R.K. Mishra, Professor, Institute of Public Enterprise, Osmania University Campus, Hyderabad in a paper titled “National Civil services system in India: a Critical View” gave the following account of the development of civil services in India.

“There is no account of the organisation of the civil service pertaining to the ancient Indian state (200 BC - 1000 AD). However, in the Mauryan period (313 BC), Vishnugupta (also called Kautilya) authored the treatise known as Kautilya's Arthashastra. Kautilya laid down the qualifications of the civil servants for appointment to the court. He described the views of various experts on this issue. In his view, loyalty and sincerity were to be the two main qualifications in a person to be appointed as a civil servant. Kautilya

also suggested some checks and balances on the appointment of civil servants. He prescribed a clearance by the vigilance department of the state for the appointment of civil servants. He recommended a continuous watch on the functioning of the civil service, and a briefing to the king on the performance of the civil servants on a regular basis. Kautilya talked of the various heads of the different branches of the civil service. The superintendent of trade (Panyadhyaksha) was to head the commercial service, including internal and external trade, and in that capacity was expected to organize an array of functionaries engaged in such service. The superintendent of agriculture (Sitadhyaksha) was the head of the department of agriculture, in which capacity he had to look after the state farms, government lands, and regulation of the lands belonging to individuals. His primary job was that of formulating the agriculture policy and ensuring its implementation. The superintendent of chariots (Rathadhyaksha) was the head of the defence department. Besides ensuring the security of the people from foreign aggression and preserving the safety of the borders, he was responsible for the matters related to defence production, which invariably had to take place in the defence factories owned by the state. He had to deal with the matters relating to the army and appointments of the heads of the defence factories. The superintendent of mines (Swaranadhyaksha) was head of the department of mines, dealing with the mining of various minerals such as gold, copper, iron, diamonds, etc. Among other things, he had to appoint efficient mining engineers on the basis of a test which would invariably help an examination of their knowledge about the inner and upper crusts of the earth. The superintendent of forests (Vanyadhyaksha) was head of the department of forestry. He had to ensure the protection and conservation of forests and be in charge of the formulation of policies concerning the growth of forests. The superintendent of weights (Bharadhyaksha) was head of the weights and measures department. He was assisted by trained inspectors who were responsible for conducting surprise checks to ensure the correctness of the various weights and measures. He was also competent to prescribe punishments to errants not complying with the state provisions of transacting the business with specific kinds of weights and measures. The superintendent of textiles (Sutradhyaksha) was responsible for formulating the textile policy of the state, running of the textile factories, and providing employment to socially discarded people and those living in abject poverty. The superintendent of audit (Lokadhyaksha) was the chief of the audit. He had a cadre of officials supporting him in the task of auditing the state accounts and examining the state budgets. Kautilya laid down a code of conduct for the civil servants which prescribed swift promotions for efficient

and effective officials, and severe punishment for those who were corrupt. The severest punishment suggested by Kautilya was beheading such corrupt civil servants. Kautilya talked of the responsiveness of the civil servants since he believed in the view that the power of the state came from its subjects.

During the medieval period (1000-1600 AD), Akbar the Great founded and nurtured the civil service. During his period, he initiated land reforms (1457 AD), and established the land revenue system which later became a major constituent of the Indian taxation system. His civil service had a welfare and a regulatory-orientation.

The East India Company had a civil service responsible for carrying out commercial functions. They were far away from the common people, as they never tried to mix with and impress upon them that they had been there to bring about a transformation in the Indian society.

The British civil service came on the Indian scene after the takeover of the East India Company in the 1860s. Initially the British civil service was a part of a police state, where its major task was that of carrying out law and order functions. It was disjointed as the different provinces had different civil services. There was no code of conduct developed by any of the British-India provinces. The functionaries of the different provinces were free to appoint people of their choice. Officials were handpicked both from the army and non-army fields. Their pay and allowances were subject to the discretion of the government. However, these used to be very high by the standards prevailing then. The term civil service is an Indian contribution to the discipline of public administration. To distinguish the government officials from the army officials, the term civil service was used by the British government in undivided Punjab in the later part of the 18th century.

The British government set up the Indian civil service in 1911, primarily with the objective of strengthening the British administration in the UK. However, it could not succeed in that, but very usefully retained the idea for strengthening the administration of its colonial base in India. Initially the recruitment to the Indian civil service was confined only to the Britishers. The minimum age of entry was kept at 19 years and the maximum age was prescribed as 21 years. The language of examination was English. The only centre for conducting the examination was London. However, due to pressures and demands raised by the Indian National Congress in 1921,

Indians were allowed to take the examination. In 1922 one Indian passed the Indian Civil Service Examination. Later, on the basis of the recommendations of the Aitchison Committee, the minimum and maximum ages were increased from 19 and 21 years to 20 and 22 years respectively<sup>1</sup>. The candidates were allowed to take the examination both at London and India. A ratio of 50:50 was decided for the British and the Indian people for intake in the Indian civil service. In 1935 the British government decided to establish interim rule in the various provinces of India, which resulted in an exodus of the British subjects as civil servants and, as a result, the number of Indian subjects in the Indian civil service increased tremendously. Though initially the British government set up only the Indian civil service, later on they added a statutory civil service and central civil services. In the course of time the statutory civil service was weeded out and there remained on the scene only the remaining two services, namely, the Indian civil service and the central civil services. At the time of independence, besides the Indian civil service there were nine central civil services in the country. The independence of the country posed new challenges to the civil servants. They were no more expected to perform the role of a police state. The welfare of the Indian subjects was viewed as the central task to be performed by the Indian state, and hence they were to be an instrument of carrying out welfare functions which, among other things, included the settlement of refugees and providing minimum conditions for their day-to-day living, safeguarding the national borders from external aggression, and promoting conditions responsible for internal peace.

The civil service system in post-independent India was reorganized. At the central level, the civil services included the All-India services, such as the Indian Administrative Service, the Indian Foreign Service, and the Indian Police Service, and the central services. The central services are grouped into four categories in order of their importance, namely, Group A, B, C, and D services. The union territories were to be served by both the All-India and the central services. The various provinces of the country had to have their own civil services.

The onset of economic planning in India in 1951, with the launch of its First Five-Year Plan enjoined on the Indian civil service the role of development administration. In this new mould, they were expected to participate in the administration of public enterprises, regulation of the private sector, formulation of socio-economic and political policies, elimination of poverty, development of rural areas, combating inflation, effective monetary

management, reduction of gender gap, elimination of social inequity, etc. In the early 1980s the Indian state had its first experience with the severe resource crunch, which deepened by the end of the 1980s. This led to the emergence of a new economic policy in 1991, which saw a rollback of the state in economic activities both at the macro and micro levels, meaning thereby formulation of such macro-economic policies which spurred a favourable environment for private sector participation, and reforms at the macro-level leading to the contraction of the public enterprise system, and the existence of only healthy public sector units. In other words, the 1990s foresee for the state a facilitator's role. Thus, the civil service in the 1990s and beyond would have to don this new role for itself, which means the Indian Administrative Service, the Indian Foreign Service, and the Indian Police Service, as the three All-India services, and 29 other central services in the country, will have to have a new orientation. The provincial civil services will have to follow suit.

To sum up the above discussion, it is clear that in ancient India, the civil servants acted as personal servants of the rulers, in the medieval age, they became state servants as they were in the state employment, and in British-India the civil servants acquired the complexion of public servants. During this period, the civil service also became a protected service, as in 1861 the first Indian Civil Service Act in India was passed which gave many privileges to the then civil servants, including their recruitment, promotion, termination, pension, payment of salaries, etc. The ethos of the civil service in independent-India changed from welfare-orientation in the late 1940s to development-orientation between the 1960s and 1980s, and finally to the facilitator's role in the 1990s, as dictated by the environmental challenges, collective choice mechanisms reflected in the manifestos issued by the various political parties during the 1996 general elections, and the challenge of meeting the democratic needs of the teeming millions.”

## Chapter II

### Role of Bureaucracy

#### **A. Providing continuity to the Government**

The permanent executive of the administrative set up comprise the bureaucracy. A distinction between the political executive and the permanent executive has already been made. The political executive like the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers or the President are elected for a specific period. In India their term of office is five years while the President of U.S.A. is elected for four years. After the completion of their term, there is a change in the political executive. Such changes may take place even earlier, for example, when there is a change in the party position in the legislature bringing to power another Prime Minister and Ministers. Often members from different political parties are elected in successive elections. But every time there is a change in government, the policies of the state and its functions need not necessarily be changed. Also, during the period when the new executive is in the process of being instituted, the government has to continue its basic functions. The permanent executive or the bureaucracy provides continuity to the government.

#### **B. Providing stability to the government**

The change of government is sometimes an occasion for disturbances in the country, e.g., during the coup d'état in certain countries. There may be other occasions when social disturbances take place. During these times, the basic functions of the government have to be carried on. The bureaucracy provides such stability to the government.

#### ***Implementation of the policies***

We have made a distinction between policy making and the implementation of the policies. The political executive is responsible for the former and the latter function is performed by the bureaucracy.

Policies made by the political executive and laws passed by the legislature are meant to be made applicable to the society. This function is performed by the bureaucracy. The real test of policies and laws lies in their effective implementation. The bureaucracy performs this function and is often called the backbone of the government.

### ***Extending help in policy making***

While the distinction between policy making and implementation is useful for clear understanding, policy making is a continuous process. Even while implementing, a chain of decisions have to be made. The bureaucracy has to take these day-to-day decisions while implementing the broad policies made by the political executive. Bureaucracy's role becomes important for technical aspects of the decisions also. The bureaucracy often advises the policy makers on the issues and problems that have to be kept in view while policies are being formulated and laws are being made. For the practical aspects of policies, the advice of the bureaucracy is required. The bureaucracy plays an important role even in policy making. Though bureaucracy has been a necessary part of the state conceptually and functionally, its importance has increased in modern times.

### ***Development Administration***

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, developmental functions of the government have been emphasized. Development administration indicates the new emphasis in countries like India.

The states have to take an active role in the developmental activities and the bureaucracy has an important role. This change in the functions has meant a change of emphasis in the nature of bureaucracy. Development administration is not just an addition to the traditional functions of the bureaucracy but it refers to a change in its orientation, attitude and behaviour. Indian administration has been the main agency of development since 1952. The demands and expectations from the administration are not only in terms of maintaining law and order but also initiating socioeconomic changes in Indian society. The performance of the administration is evaluated in terms of the results within a time period. Since the administration

aimed towards social change, requires commitment on the part of the administrators, their attitude and behaviour have to be changed accordingly. Development administration can not afford to have formal relations with the people who are targeted by the programmes. The administrators have to keep in mind the special requirements and satisfaction of the people. They have to reach out to the people and ensure their participation. There is a closer relation between the people and the administration. Development administration in countries like India has brought a basic change in bureaucracy. A balance has to be maintained between the requirements of bureaucracy like anonymity, impartiality and objectivity and the people – oriented nature of development administration.

The policy of liberalization initiated in the 1990s has affected the Indian bureaucracy. Many programmes that were handled by the state are being transferred to the private sector, to the cooperatives and to the non-state agencies like the Non – Governmental Organisations (NGOs). The bureaucracy has to function in partnership with such agencies.

### ***Commitment to the State's goals and objectives***

Bureaucracy has touched new heights in modern democracies. Its size and functions have increased enormously. Emergence of the Welfare State has added new dimensions to the expansion of bureaucracy. The nature of the role of bureaucracy in policy making is, thus, changing gradually. The concept of neutrality of bureaucracy has also lost significance. Political neutrality means not only the absence of political activity or bias on the part of the individual member of the bureaucracy but also that bureaucracy has to respond to the will of the political executive, no matter what its political complexion may be. Now the term 'committed bureaucracy' does not connote that the civil servants are loyal to a particular individuals, political person or leader. Commitment connotes commitment to the objectives, ideals, institutions and modalities contained in the Constitution, the policies and programmes of the government, and the laws, regulations and rules issued by the political executive.

In the Indian context, the divergence of view between the ruling parties have become narrow and the division between the functions of

politicians and bureaucracy in terms of policy making and implementation has ceased to be rigid. The processes of policy making are no longer confined to the political executive they spread over the entire fabric of the government, resulting in inescapable delegation and zones of such policy, where the political executive does not come into the picture at all. The leadership role of public bureaucracy has become explicit in all political systems. Now it is very difficult to escape commitment of some sort or another to the State's goals and objectives, and certain degree of subjective bias cannot be eliminated.

Speaking at an event to mark the observance of the first Civil Service Day on April 21, 2006, the Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh urged the civil service to reorient itself and deliver better services to the people. The role of civil servants in the present context is clearly brought out in the following excerpts from the said speech of the prime Minister:

“..... Our national leaders like Panditji and Sardar Patel viewed the All India Services as a group of professionals who would take a long-term view of the nation's needs and priorities. While the state and local administration would focus on day-to-day issues of governance, the All India Services were charged with the responsibility of thinking ahead and into the future. This role has only increased with the emergence of strong competitive political forces in various parts of our country. Democracy is built into the body politic and in our constitutional system. But we have also with it witnessed growing in short tenure of Government and politicians are not able to pay attention to longer term concerns or to weigh carefully the trade-offs between various objectives and goals and therefore the great importance of having a permanent Civil Service to pay attention to all these issues and view all these issues in the framework of strategic long-term thinking taking into account our national interest. Therefore, our civil servants represent a national establishment with a national responsibility. You, therefore, continue to constitute the “steel framework” of our Republic. This gives you both power and responsibility. It also gives you the opportunity to guide a political leadership that is subject to the law of electoral change. Governments may come and go, but the administration endures and must play its due role.”

“ ..... As the economy evolves and society and our polity change over time as they must, Government and the Civil Service must also prepare themselves to play a new and varied role. Markets will increasingly become the arbitrators of resource allocation in many cases. At the same time, it is necessary to realize that markets can at times lead to marginalization of the poor and the vulnerable sections of our society. We must not forget that markets after all, serve those who are part of the market system. When millions of people are living on the edges of subsistence, with little in the form of assets or skills to be active participants in the evolving market economy, market signals cannot have significance for them. While markets can facilitate higher growth, a government must ensure that growth is equitable, inclusive and not unduly harsh on those not equipped to manage change. Ensuring and assuring equitable and sustainable growth is, therefore, an important challenge before our Government and all those involved in public administration.

The modernization of both our economy and society will require Governments to play new roles and in an increasingly transparent manner. Our civil servants must learn to grapple with the phenomenal explosion of knowledge. They will have to learn to seek the right information and utilize it for public good. Another aspect of government that is going to change is in the arena of accountability. Through greater access to information and effective mechanisms to seek redressal, the average citizen is likely to demand his or her due and is not going to be very patient about it. The Right to Information Act has empowered the citizens to seek more information from Governments about their functioning. Further, there has been an explosion of civil society activities. Governments need to constructively engage with various elements in the civil society, actively seek answers to problems in a transparent manner and manage the interface with public opinion effectively. Modern governments will have to therefore reorient themselves to this reality. Government must develop the capability to work in a more open environment with more demanding standards of transparency and accountability.

Historically, governments have viewed themselves as administrators

of public delivery services. They have viewed citizens as outside beneficiaries of governmental action. Citizens were expected to accept whatever was provided, with little choice on offer. This situation is changing all over the world. Citizens are now expecting good service from Governments as a matter of right. Governments are expected to deliver efficient public services or facilitate privatisation. Effectiveness and efficiency of public service delivery is increasingly being demanded as a basic right of our citizens. Government is expected to be a service-provider rather than a mere administrator of a public service delivery system. This change in orientation is the third key challenge facing the governments of this day.

The Civil Service has to reorient itself and be trained to deliver better services to our people. To make Government more efficient, we need a new public service orientation in the thinking of civil servants. You cannot view yourself as mere administrators. You are also managers and catalytic agents of change. You have to manage change and manage it efficiently and equitably and manage efficient delivery of public services. This new orientation must begin at the very beginning.....”

## Chapter III

### Characteristics and Problems of Indian Bureaucracy

#### A. Characteristics of Indian Bureaucracy

The Indian bureaucracy follows the federal distribution of powers between the Centre and the States. The two main components of the Indian bureaucracy are that of officers belonging to the central services and the officers in the state cadre. The former is recruited by the UPSC and their service conditions are controlled by the central government. The officers in the state cadres are recruited by the State Public Service Commissions and work under the control of the respective state governments. The services are further classified into different cadres keeping in view the requirements of different departments, e.g., general administration, police, revenue service, customs and excise. These are horizontally divided into class I, II and III services. There are elaborate rules for their recruitment and service conditions.

The Indian bureaucracy has a tradition of dominance of ‘generalist’ civil servants. This tradition has indeed undergone some changes because of the developmental requirements of the country. Emphasis on science and technology has also brought about some changes in the generalist orientations of Indian bureaucracy.

The Indian civil service system is rank-based and does not follow the tenets of the position-based civil services. This has led to the absence of a specialised civil service system in India. The basic philosophy of the Indian civil service system has contributed a lot to this phenomenon, as it puts a heavy emphasis on the recruitment of generalists and not specialists. The incumbents of the Indian civil service enjoy very short tenures, usually less than one year.

Despite a great influence of the political world, the Indian civil service has so far been able to keep its own identity. In the case of the British

days, the politicization was much less. However, with independence bequeathing a new role of development, the Indian civil servants could not hold their flock together. The number of cases of corruption has also increased tremendously. This has been partly due to the political pressure, and also partly on account of an erosion in the values of the civil servants.

The civil servants have been ranked very low on innovation, transformation, involvement, etc., by politicians, academicians and the police officers.

## **B. Problems of Bureaucracy**

With the increasing complexity of the functions of the modern states, the role of the 'specialists' in administration is emphasised. Many of these functions require not only the basic capabilities and administrative skills of the 'generalists', but also some professional knowledge in the required specialised field of science, technology and management. Fusion of the 'generalist' and the 'specialist' has to be done in modern states. In India scientists and other specialists in specific fields are often appointed to administrative positions.

In fact, the role of the bureaucracy in a democracy must be to ensure that the government is for the people. This means the bureaucracy must be able to be responsive to the needs of the people and must be effective in implementing government policies especially those which are meant for the welfare of the people. The bureaucracy in India has not been able to come up to these expectations and the main cause appears to be the bureaucratic culture. Culture is nothing but a framework of values. It depends upon a number of factors. For example, if we talk about the culture of our people, it can be directly traced to the influence of our religions, our seers, our parents and elders who inculcate in us the values and the framework of our values represents our culture. If we say that the bureaucratic culture is the main cause of our problems, can we identify the factors that lead to this culture?

The major factor which leads to bureaucratic culture in India is the overall principle in government that rules are important. This is because government has to be objective. Hence rules are important.

Precedents become sacred because the bureaucracy is not expected to treat similar cases differently. Though the words **file and life** have the same letters, once you become a bureaucrat, the file becomes more important than life. That is why people generally get unsympathetic and heartless treatment from government agencies. In government the bureaucracy believes that it is more important to do the thing rightly than do the right things. Everybody is afraid of audit and perhaps vigilance. Napoleon said: "Army marches on its stomach". Government marches on paper. So, records become extremely important especially when they can always be challenged and cases reviewed years after decisions had been taken. This fear of audit or even vigilance is perhaps at the root of the apotheosis of rules and procedure by the government. That is why the sanctity of procedures. Red tape flourishes on this basis. Once red tape comes, automatically effectiveness is diminished, responsiveness is eliminated.

Of course one cannot do without red tape because government has the basic responsibility that it should not only be fair but seen to be fair. This means that all people in a particular situation demanding a particular service or concession from the government are treated equally. That brings us to the issue of precedents. Hunting for precedents and tracing papers constitute another element of delay and red tape which in turn leads to problems like corruption. We can therefore see that one element of the unsympathetic and in some case the anti poor attitude of bureaucracy can be traced to the significance of rules and procedures. But let us not forget that we cannot eliminate rules and procedures because they are needed to ensure objectivity and accountability.

Transition in the Indian bureaucracy on account of the development orientation has not been smooth. There are frequent comments and complaints against the Indian bureaucracy on this account. Though the bureaucracy has often been commended for its positive aspects in the running of the Indian state since Independence, the challenge of the change in the policy since the 1990s has to be managed by it successfully.

### C. Main Problems of Bureaucracy

Most people at some time or another complain about two main problems with bureaucracy: **inefficiency** and **arbitrariness**.

On the topic of bureaucracy and efficiency, James Q. Wilson (Wilson taught at Harvard and UCLA and is well known for his influential “broken windows” theory of crime (1982) wrote: “Efficiency is a ratio of valued resources used to valued outputs produced...The smaller that ratio, the more efficient the production. If the valued output is a rebuilt skating ring, [for example] then whatever process uses the fewest dollars or the least time to produce a satisfactory ring is the most efficient process.”

But, Wilson notes, the valued output may not be only a rebuilt skating ring! Government has many valued outputs, including “a reputation for integrity, the confidence of the people, and the support of important interest groups. When we complain about skating rings not being built on time we speak as if all we cared about were skating rings. But when we complain that contracts were awarded without competitive bidding or in a way that allowed bureaucrats to line their pockets, we acknowledge that we care about many things besides skating rings; we care about the...constraints...that we want government to observe. A government that is slow to build rings but is honest and accountable in its actions and properly responsive to worthy constituencies may be a very efficient government, if we measure efficiency...by taking into account all of the valued outputs.” Wilson concludes: “A perfectly efficient agency could be a monstrous one, swiftly denying us our liberties, economically inflicting injustices, and competently expropriating our wealth.”

Arbitrariness refers to “officials acting without legal authority, or with that authority in a way that offends our sense of justice. Justice means, first, that we require the government to treat people equally on the basis of clear rules known in advance: If Becky and Bob both are driving sixty miles per hour in a thirty-mile-per-hour zone and the police give a ticket to Bob, we believe they also should give a ticket to Becky. Second we believe that justice obliges the government to take into account the special needs and

circumstances of individuals: If Becky is speeding because she is on her way to the hospital to give birth to a child and Bob is speeding for the fun of it, we may feel that the police should ticket Bob but not Becky. Justice in the first sense means fairness, in the second it means responsiveness. Obviously, fairness and responsiveness often are in conflict.”

Wilson says “The checks and balances of the American constitutional system reflect our desire to reduce the arbitrariness of official rule. That desire is based squarely on the premise that inefficiency is a small price to pay for freedom and responsiveness. Congressional oversight, judicial review, interest-group participation, media investigations, and formalized procedures all are intended to check administrative discretion.” Constraints such as these reduce the efficiency of an agency but also its arbitrariness. “We want the government to be both fair and responsive, but the more rules impose to insure fairness (that is, to treat all people alike [like Becky and Bob above], the harder we make it for the government to be responsive (that is, to take into account the special needs and circumstances of a particular case.)”

Americans fear bureaucracy’s use of discretion to guide decisions and actions, and insist on rules, for example, particularly “at the hands of...street-level bureaucracies that deal with us as individuals rather than as organized groups and that touch the more intimate aspects of our lives [e.g., police, schools, medical institutions, prisons]. That worry is natural; in these settings we feel helpless and the State seems omnipotent. We want these bureaucracies to treat us fairly but we also want them to be responsive to our particular needs...”

Did you know that European bureaucracies are less rule-bound than American bureaucracies? This is true, according to Wilson. “The United States relies on rules to control the exercise of official judgment to a greater extent than any other industrialized democracy. The reason...has little to do with the kinds of bureaucrats we have and everything to do with the political environment in which those bureaucrats must work.”

How then does a society strike a reasonable balance between governance by rules and governance by discretion? First, Wilson suggests, we must “sensitize ourselves to the gains and losses associated with governance by rule rather than by discretion.” We need to be aware that in America rules induce agencies to 1) produce certain observable outcomes, 2) create offices, procedures, and claims inside an organization that can protect precarious values, and 3) specify minimum standards that must be met. Talented, strongly motivated people usually will find ways of making even rule-ridden systems work to get the job done, says Wilson. Second, if we wish to complain about how rule-ridden our government agencies seem to be, we should direct those complaints not to the agencies but to the Congress, the courts, and the organized interests that make effective use of Congress and the courts.”