

## XII

### SOME DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

Administrative reform of the kind implemented in India appears to be characterised by a few distinguishing features. The present chapter purports to identify and analyse these features.

First, as earlier mentioned, administrative reform owes itself to three principal sources. It may be a by-product of the larger political processes such as reorganisation of states, or public enquiry against a Chief Minister, or a probe into a scandal. It may be the principal product at the macro level, an irresistible example being the central Administrative Reform Commission (1966-70). It also flows from the central reform agency such as the Department of Personnel and Administrative Reform.

In the second place, it is the Central Government which has provided leadership in this field at all the three levels of governance in India—central, state and local. This has happened primarily under the impact of planning, though the fact of the same political party being in power in the states for a long time also contributed a good deal to this practice. Each five year plan document has devoted a chapter to suggest measures to make public administration a fit instrument of development and the planners have taken a unified approach to matters relating to administrative reform. The Central Government has thus set up committees on matters which, under the Constitution of India, fall within the jurisdiction of lower levels of government. In 1952 it ap-

pointed a one-man committee consisting of V.T. Krishnamachari to report on Indian and state administrative services and problems of district administration. State and district administration were included in the terms of reference of the Administrative Reform Commission and the latter produced a report on state administration. Besides, several central reports have dealt with matters of common concern to both the levels of government. The recommendations of the committees dealing with problems of corruption, redressal of citizens' grievances, etc., apply to both the levels.

The Central Government's role towards the reforms of local government is even more conspicuous. The rural local government in India, called panchayati raj, owes itself to a committee—the Study Team for the Study of Community Projects and National Extension Service (1957)—appointed in 1956 by the Planning Commission's Committee on Plan Projects. The Central Government also set up committees to examine the feasibility of having nyaya panchayats, the financial resources of panchayati raj bodies, the position of the gram sabha, the mode of election of panchayati raj bodies, etc. It is significant that the Central Government appointed in 1977 the Committee on Panchayati Raj Institutions under the chairmanship of Asoka Mehta to suggest how these bodies could be made effective and vigorous.

No less significant is the Centre's effort in the reform of urban local government in India. The Central Government's recommendations for municipal reforms owe their inspiration to the committees and commissions it set up as well as to organs it brought into being to consider aspects and problems of urban government. The committees it has set up to attend to the tasks of municipal reforms are: the Local Finance Enquiry Committee, 1949-51; the Taxation Enquiry Commission,

1953-54; the Committee on the Training of Municipal Employees, 1963; and the Rural-Urban Relationship Committee, 1963—66.

Proposals for municipal reforms have also flowed from the central council of local self-government, the conference of state ministers for town and country planning; and the conference of municipal corporations, all of which have been constituted by the Central Government. It is also worthwhile to note that the central council of local self-government has itself two kinds of roles in the field of municipal reform. It formally sets in motion committees charged with definite terms of reference (e.g., the Committee of Ministers on Augmentation of Financial Resources of Urban Local Bodies, the Committee on the Service Conditions of Municipal Employees, etc.). In addition, it sets out to examine municipal problems and issues confronting urban local government as a whole and opines on them. Similarly, the conference of state ministers for town and country planning launched, in 1963, the Committee on Model Planning Legislation, which reported in 1966.

The foregoing analysis thus amply confirms the activist role which the Central Government in India has been playing in administrative reform. The public administration of the country is an integrated one even though its polity is undoubtedly federal. What is more, the integrating feature of the administrative system has received powerful impetus from planning which has been under way since 1950. Secondly, in a democracy the experiences and perception which the political leadership accumulates at one level of government continue to affect its thinking and behaviour even though they may move to another level. Both these factors point towards the need to evolve an integrated perspective of administrative modernisation. Whether or not all these efforts have borne fruit is another matter. At least so far

as administrative reform in India is concerned, federalism has not been a restrictive or inhibiting factor.

This does not mean that state governments have been entirely lacking in concern for matters of administrative reform. Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Gujarat have set up, at one time or another and some even several times, administrative reform committees. Besides, each state government has a central reforms agency, generally called the Department of Personnel and Administrative Reform, working directly under the Chief Secretary. Nevertheless, the effort put in, and interest shown by, the Centre in the reform of the lower level administrative system is too conspicuous to be ignored. The Centre has not only set up committees to suggest reform of state level administration and even of local government but has also convened conferences of state level political executives and permanent executives on matters of administrative reform.

It is an age of cooperative federalism, and in today's complex environment the Central Government cannot completely insulate itself from the state's sphere of functions, more so in India where almost all responsibilities in both development administration and regulatory administration are entrusted to the states under the Constitution. Nevertheless, the Centre's active concern in the states' sphere is not entirely without pitfalls. It is in the nature of things that the central effort in this field is inclined towards suggesting, without much discrimination, one 'model' of institutions and processes throughout the country. Each state has its own history, sub-culture and traditions and the central prescription may not be able to take into account all these. It may thus turn out to be dysfunctional. Even otherwise, the various states are at different stages of growth and development, and it

is axiomatic that any sensible reform must respond to, and fit into, its ecology. Finally, excessive central attention may also threaten to dry up the states' interest and undermine their initiative, without which no reform, however valuable, is possible for feasible.

The third feature of India's administrative reform is that, though the country has set up an impressive number of committees of administrative reform at all the three levels of government and there is today substantial literature available on issues of administrative reform, the political leadership of the land, at every level, has not given sustained intelligent attention to tasks of administrative modernisation. This has happened because political leadership in India, more so at the state and local levels, generally lacks any previous experience of administration; neither does it evince much aptitude for administration. Indeed, the ministers are inclined to show more interest in matters like individual postings, transfers, promotions, etc., than in questions of administrative reform. Even academic and research institutions in the country have not made any notable attempt to provide truly professional leadership in this direction, and even a body like the Indian Institute of Public Administration cannot be said to fall entirely outside the ambit of this criticism. Voluntary organisations and citizens' forums, too, are conspicuously absent in the field of administrative reform.

The net result of all these lacunae is that the business of reform has been left to bureaucracy, which is ironical, because a party to an issue has virtually been allowed to become its judge. In India, the bureaucracy is an extraordinarily powerful institution, a contention which can perhaps be understood more fully if something more is said about it.

## LEVIATHAN THAT IS BUREAUCRACY

The bureaucracy in India is an old institution, much older than all those which today dominate the political scene—the politicians, the political parties, parliament, the council of ministers, etc. Originally consisting of merchants and writers, it was professionalised by the year 1853 when the Charter Act enacted in that year terminated the right to recruitment of the East India Company, and in its place installed an open competitive examination as the basis for public recruitment. The Macaulay Report of 1854 legitimised the supremacy of the Indian Civil Service. The bureaucracy in India, thus, emerged in all its completeness by 1854. On the other hand, organised polity, in the modern sense of the term, was much slower, and late in coming; its emergence can be traced to the year 1885 when the Indian National Congress was established.

The role of civil service in India was thus designed in complete isolation from the role of the politician. It also needs to be stressed that the Congress Party, in its early years, functioned more as a club for educated, urban (or, to be more correct, metropolitan) Indians than as a political party. It was only with the implementation in 1921 of the Government of India Act, 1919 that for the first time in India the polity and the bureaucracy came into mutual administrative contact in a segment of the provincial (now state) government. The role that had combined policy making and execution, which the bureaucracy was traditionally performing, underwent, from now onwards, a change. The change was first in this limited sector of government at the provincial level, and later extended to other spheres: the civil service was for the first time in modern Indian political history called upon to work under elected ministers—an arrangement viewed as entirely normal in western democracies. The historical fact that the bureaucracy

came first and polity later and the bureaucratic culture and the political culture evolved separately and differently, even antagonistically, has tended to retard the balanced development of both, rendering the former far more powerful. The civil service in India functions under conditions of low structural differentiation, which too, adds considerably to its power. It easily becomes the dominant institution in the land. The voluntary organisations are generally underdeveloped, and even where they exist themselves depend on political and administrative patronage for survival.

Though India inherited an administrative system which had been designed to subserve colonial interests, independent India's addition to it has been no less substantial. In particular, India's greatest contribution has lain in the areas of planning, public undertakings and special authorities or organisations. The Planning Commission was set up in 1950 to prepare the country's five year plans. In the process of the execution of the plan, a large number of organisations were set up. These organisations, and many existing ones, had to be reoriented and strengthened to respond to the discipline of planning. The impact of planning has been felt both vertically and horizontally, but most conspicuously by public administration which deals with developmental and promotional activities.

The new organisations set up in independent India were not hampered by any old, constraining legacies, and had a clean slate to write on. But this opportunity was largely missed. Personnel from existing government departments were generally sent to organise these new activities, and they set up organisational structures and procedures of work along the lines most familiar to them, which were not necessarily the most functional! Indeed, more often than not these new activities have been cast in organisational forms closely patterned on

existing ones. Even where deliberate departures were sought and new organisational designs were put into operation, the spirit of functioning did not markedly differ. This happened either because the personnel in charge of the new responsibilities were too deeply socialised into the traditional administrative folklore to reorient themselves successfully or because the controlling ministry construed its role as being one of producing its own replicas even in the new areas of activities. The various reports of the Estimates and the Public Accounts Committees do not make one feel that the new organisations are in any way more functional than those whose origin predates the year of India's independence. The sales tax department is an example. Even new organisations have almost bodily adopted the business practices and other details prevailing in the 'core' public administration, and in the course of time have imbibed the traits characteristic of older bodies. All, regardless of age or location, seem to get socialised in varying degrees, into the dominant administrative culture of the land.

In absence of political will and determination to carry out the necessary administrative reform, much of the practice of administrative reform in India has remained focused on the mechanics of administration such as organisation and methods, personnel practices and budgetary procedures. This attention has emanated from a desire for efficiency in public administration and economy in the conduct of its affairs. While this was necessary and desirable, a vital segment of public administration did not receive the priority it deserved. This has been the country's civil service, which has so far succeeded in evading nearly all attempts at reform and has indeed absorbed the least amount of change since independence.

Asoka Chanda, in his report entitled 'Notes on Changes Necessary in System of Budgetary and Financial



Control and other Matters to Eliminate Delays in Execution of Projects', submitted to the government in 1954, had recommended for the first time since 1947 a scheme for the reorganisation of the civil service. He suggested:

The ideal solution will, of course, be the constitution of a common civil service, divided vertically into departments to provide for specialised training in the different spheres of government activity. This will remove service consciousness, foster unity and provide for greater flexibility.<sup>1</sup>

The Asoka Chanda report was not made public and thus his ideas could not reach a larger audience. The Administrative Reform Commission's Report on Personnel Administration, published in 1969, again focused attention on the need for reform in the civil service. The ARC sought to redefine the equation between the various organised services. The inevitable effect of its recommendation would have been to eliminate the hegemonic role of any service. But the pressure groups within the civil service have been very powerful and have gagged and muzzled many of the ARC recommendations.

Mention must be made of the emergence of a large number of training institutions within, or on the periphery of, public administration, to impart training to middle-level public personnel in a bid to improve their administrative capabilities. Consultants and experts have also emerged, and today there is an increased interaction between government departments and these problem-solving administrative engineers. This development is certainly in response to the increasing complexity of public administration itself and a growing desire of the senior bureaucracy to tone up efficiency. But it has its own weaknesses which ought to be guarded against. In the first place, the practice of con-

<sup>1</sup>Asoka Chanda, *Notes on Changes Necessary in System of Budgetary and Financial Control and other Matters to Eliminate Delays in Execution of Projects*, 1954, p. 41.

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tracting out to professional experts seeks to detach administrative reform from political processes and values; and any large-scale recourse to it must be firmly discouraged. Otherwise, administrative reform is apt to acquire impersonal and technocratic colours. Besides, the practice has in it the seeds of possible abuses and malpractices particularly in the prevalent level of integrity in society. Many consultancy assignments are pedestrian in quality and are often inspired by a desire to evade or diffuse responsibility, to make the consultant say what the patron really wants to have said, to build linkages and even oblige friends and relatives.

## INSIGHTS FROM INDIAN EXPERIENCE

An analysis of the Indian experience with administrative reform dating back to 1947 should be helpful in understanding the dynamics of administrative modernisation in a developing country. There are many insights to be gained. In the first place, administrative reform, to be effective, must be a concern pervading the entire governmental system of a country, not merely confined to the reform agency in the government. It must, moreover, be articulated as an integral part of the larger process of nation building, state-making and development; thus viewed, enhancement of administrative capabilities would have to be firmly related to specific programmes and contexts in order to be more meaningful. Secondly, administrative reform must be backed by a well-defined strategy both in its formulation and implementation. India has consistently given much more attention to formulation of measures of reform than to the operational problems of implementation.

Thirdly, of the two approaches to be adopted by a country, the 'total' and the 'nodal', a developing country may perhaps be advised the nodal one. It is good for a reform body not to spread its energy too widely, and consequently too thinly. Administrative reform must evince a stern sense of priorities. Fourthly, an administrative reform body must address itself to the task of visualising reform from the viewpoint of the system. In other words, it must have a clear comprehension of the forest and must view the individual trees from this perspective. The various attempts at administrative

reform in India have successively emphasised that the 'nuts and bolts' of administration need attention, that the goods, that managerial competence needs to be promoted, and that the behavioural orientation of people at work needs to be given attention to. But it is important to bear in mind that an indiscriminate transplantation of administrative institutions or processes is apt to be counterproductive, and reform ought not to be conceived in isolation from either the human factor in administration, or from the national ethos.

Fifthly, the timing of reform is the crux of the matter. There is a preparedness to accept changes at certain heightened moments in a nation's history. Similarly, certain items of reform become the focus of attention and begin to be propagated, an example being the suggestion regarding the setting up of an ombudsman. In India, the scope of implementation of reforms was indeed very wide at the time of independence, because improvement is easy to carry out in times of intensive political change. Likewise, the administrative system could have absorbed many wide-ranging changes at the time when the planning process was launched. Again, for instance, when the Janata Party came to power in March 1977 as a result of what may aptly be described as the voters' revolution, there was an appropriate climate to carry out system-wide administrative reform.

Sixthly, a concern for administrative reform becomes widespread and overriding in times of crises and calamities. In such times, failure looks most conspicuous, and readiness to expect and absorb radical changes in administration is unreserved and full. In Pakistan, for instance, the concept of a unified civil service was introduced in the wake of unprecedented floods that caused untold suffering to the people in many parts of the country. France revamped its civil service soon

after the traumatic experiences of World War II. Indian administration, on the other hand, is most heroic in an hour of crisis and tribulation, and it is its undoubted capability of crisis management which makes it ward off any bold suggestions for reform and wears out the reformer's zeal for radical changes.

Seventhly, the Indian experience appears to confirm that administrative reform is a continuous process, and a particular proposal for reform is not a gospel valid or immutable for all time to come. A particular proposal may appear good on paper but may prove to be dysfunctional in its operation. It was in pursuance of the ARC recommendation that the government created, in 1970, the Department of Personnel and located it in the cabinet secretariat to enable it to receive, without any interruptions, the guidance of the chief executive. Two years later, the Department of Administrative Reform, that had been functioning as part of the Ministry of Home Affairs since 1964, was also transferred to it to make it a composite Department of Personnel and Administrative Reform. This did not prove to be a very satisfactory transaction. The way the department functioned indicated that it was a move towards centralisation, and an unscrupulous head of government could use the new powers to promote his own personal position to the detriment of overall efficiency. This is exactly what happened in India. When matters relating to the civil service were handled in the Ministry of Home Affairs, there were certain checks and balances in operation. These controlled arbitrariness of action. But they became inoperative when the department was put directly under the Prime Minister. Indians know the misuse made under the internal emergency. The Janata government, therefore, transferred the Department of Personnel and Administrative Reform back to the Ministry of Home Affairs in 1979. The moral of this episode is that no piece of administrative reform can be thought of as the last

word on the subject.

Eighthly, the Administrative Reform Commission appears to suggest a hypothesis which carries a special meaning for students of administrative reform. If a country opts for the evolutionary process of reform, as India has, it must learn to reckon with the limited capacity of administration to absorb reforms. The ARC made 581 recommendations. This was well beyond the capacity of the administrative system to accept and absorb. Had the reform agency been discriminating about priorities it would have made only a manageable number of recommendations. Faced with this flood of recommendations, the public administration felt constrained to install its own gatekeepers to allow in only such proposals as it was capable of managing. An administrative system rejects excess load, and it has its own priorities in determining what to reject. The style of rejection may acquire many forms. The administrative system may itself succeed in having a particular recommendation formally rejected. If accepted, that recommendation may remain unimplemented or implemented in such a way that the original purpose is deliberately defeated. In short, the greater the need for administrative reform, the less the administrative capacity to absorb the desired changes. There appear to be definite limits to administrative growth especially in developing countries.

Ninthly, the bureaucracy in India has developed and perfected its own internal mechanism for unscathed survival in the face of a succession of committees on administrative reform, each making a large number of recommendations. The general procedure observed is that each recommendation is obliged to be scrutinised by the generalist bureaucracy, and the country's political leadership, as a rule, acts on this advice. An amateur civil service has enjoyed a hegemonic role in administration, and since any measure of administrative moder

nisation is bound to upset this equation its opposition to any worthwhile recommendation is intense and resolute. Where administrative reform is concerned, the generalist civil service in India acts as the third chamber of the national legislature where it functions as the opposition party commanding a permanent majority, vetoing, amending, and shelving reform proposals as it pleases.

There is more to be noticed. A major administrative reform exercise inevitably enlists the higher civil service. It would be misleading to believe that all members of this service are fired by noble societal goals. Indeed, administrative reform commission becomes the vortex of intra-bureaucratic politics and various sub-groups wage their battles to gain primacy. The working of the Administrative Reform Commission's study teams and other supportive institutions discloses the hectic underwater pedalling being done by bureaucratic sub-groups for gaining acceptance of their respective viewpoints.

Tenthly, though administrative reform has become an emotive term in India because of over-use, in practice it does not seem to receive any sustained top or high priority in contemporary national concerns. It is certainly talked about in spectacular terms, but that is all. Formulation of specific solutions and working out of minute details require hard work for which the politician has no aptitude and—in the absence of political will—the civil service no genuine desire. Consequently, administrative reform is seen, in practice, not to travel beyond the stage of broad but vague generalisations. This also explains why implementation is generally pedestrian even when it has not been lost sight of. The general view seems to be that if social and economic progress is reasonably satisfactory and people at large feel happy with the current state of affairs in the country, what is the point in taking up administrative matters? If, on the other hand,

things are getting bad, the attention gets focused on direct causes, that is, on economic and political matters and there is no time to think about improvement in public administration. In other words, neither stability nor absence of it seems to make any perceptible difference in national attitudes to questions of administrative reform.

The Indian story of administrative reform is, in a way, action in slow motion. This country has on the whole looked at the task of administrative revamping slowly, haltingly, hesitatingly, ambivalently, even often unintelligently. Neither has it been sufficiently appreciated that public administration does not exist and operate in a vacuum, unconnected with, and unaffected by, the larger social, political, and economic forces necessitating the formulation of a truly systemic approach to the question of change in administration. Public administration is rooted in a society, and has its strong and powerful linkages with a country's politics and economics. Unless therefore, a holistic view is taken, administrative reform is bound to be of only peripheral importance, being basically in the nature and style of correction slips to add something here, to delete something there—amounting to almost nothing ultimately. What is more, administrative reform will have to be interpreted in broader terms. Today, it is not merely talked of in purely conventional nuts-and-bolts sense, important though these nuts and bolts are. Citizen satisfaction, popular participation, openness in administration, public accountability, administrative morality, administrative professionalism, democratisation of administration, etc. are among the new content of reform, which should receive attention.

Finally, administrative reform is relational, being conceived in a definite context and in certain relationships. As the environment necessarily changes so does—or



should—the content of administrative reform. Many of today's objectives may become tomorrow's achievements; these in their turn would beget problems which, then, become the agenda for an administrative reformer. It is but a truism that mankind resolves one set of administrative problems to move on to a higher level of social fulfilment; and no sooner is this stage reached than it finds itself confronted with new issues released by the very process of development. Administrative reform is thus a moving equilibrium, a continuing concern, a dynamic response to social urges and aspirations.

From the foregoing, one should not form an unduly gloomy view of administrative reform in India. Deficiencies of administration and sluggishness of desired change are experienced almost everywhere, but more so in developing countries. The persistence and continuity of an administrative system are too well known, and attempts at reform have not been spectacularly successful even in advanced countries, where also, success has been limited when viewed in the context of the totality of the administrative system. Indeed, one may venture to suggest that in an ongoing administrative system, reform, at a particular moment of time, is necessarily characterised more by marginality of impact than centrality. The more established a public administration is, the less impressive would be the scope for—or even an impact of—administrative changes at one particular moment. It is only as a cumulative result of sustained attempts at reform over a period of time that public administration can get toned up.

## XIV

### SUMMING UP

A colonial administration, however benevolent, can never endear itself to the local society. The British rule in India was no exception. Yet it is widely conceded that the administrative system which the British bequeathed to India has been an asset, standing her in good stead. The writ of this administrative system ran all over the country, which brought about the unification of India. This has been a rare achievement of the foreign ruler and his gift of invaluable import to independent India.

Public administration was not directly and consciously planned for independent India by the British: the hope itself is unrealistic. Rather, the administrative legacy was the unintended consequence of the policies and approaches favoured and practised by them. Apropos of this, the country's public administration assisted the transition from Raj to Swaraj, very ably absorbing the shock of partition and the attendant problems. It set the newborn Republic in motion. What is even more noteworthy, it began to plan its activities in terms of development—a novel dimension for public administration. On the whole, it gave a good account of itself under the new political leadership as well as under the newly released impulses of development. In independent India, the promotional and developmental responsibilities of government inevitably increased in range, scale and magnitude.

This 'asset', as the passage of time proved, was not an unmixed virtue, especially when the character of the

State was transiting from regulatory to developmental and promotional. The preamble, the Directive Principles of State Policy and the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution of India articulated the political, social and economic goals of the State, and the country's public administration was now put under a solemn undeviating obligation to gear itself for their realisation. The First Five Year Plan reiterated its loyalty to these goals and even laid down guidelines to make public administration a fit instrument for carrying them out. In some fields of development, the existing agencies needed to be supplemented and strengthened; and in others, new organisations were to be established. The Planning Commission, set up in 1950, emphasised that public administration was now to shift its emphasis from the maintenance of law and order and collection of revenue to 'the development of human and material resources and the elimination of poverty and want'.<sup>1</sup>

This shift presupposed a particularly 'intensive' endeavour' on the part of all, including public administration. The patterns of public organisation and the priorities of the government and administration were now to be determined by the needs of development. This imposed a particularly heavy responsibility on public administration: The pace of national development was to depend upon the quality and efficiency of administration. The First Five Year Plan declared: 'The tasks facing the administration are larger in magnitude and more complex.' It pointed out: 'Democratic institutions are, in their nature, difficult to work, for they call for a consciousness of social purpose, courage to stand by principles and restraint in the exercise of authority.'<sup>2</sup>

The administrative concerns of the State are articulated in the Constitution itself. The Government of India

<sup>1</sup>*The First Five Year Plan*, 1951, p. 111.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

was not merely content to orchestrate such views. It moved fast into action and one of its earliest moves was to invite A.D. Gorwala, a recently retired member of the Indian Civil Service, to examine the country's administrative system and suggest strengthening measures. Strikingly noteworthy, however, was the Government's move to invite an American expert, Paul H. Appleby, to report on Indian administration. Appleby's *Public Administration in India, Report of a Survey* testified to India's public administration being among the 'dozen or so'<sup>3</sup> most advanced in the world. The country's bureaucracy thus got a certificate of fitness from a foreigner, which boosted its morale. The political leadership could thus gain self-confidence and feel bold to employ it for traditional as well as new functions.

### ATTEMPTS AT ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM

The process of appointing committees and commissions to examine administration and recommend reform is an old one and had found favour with the British Indian Government since its inception. When the governance of India was transferred into the hands of the British Crown in 1858, the Government appointed a one-man committee (under Ricketts) to take stock of the country's administrative system. Its report, called the Report on Civil Establishments and Salaries, was submitted in 1866. Coming nearer to our own times, the Central Government appointed the following committees and commissions on administrative reform since 1947:

1. The Reorganisation of Central Government (Richard Tottenham) 1945-46. (It visualises independent India; hence its inclusion.)

<sup>3</sup>Paul H. Appleby, *Public Administration in India: Report of a Survey*, Delhi, Manager of Publications, 1953, p. 2.

2. The Advisory Planning Board (K.C. Neogi), 1949.
3. The Secretariat Reorganisation Committee (Girja Shankar Bajpai), 1947.
4. The Central Pay Commission (Varadachariar).
5. The Economy Committee (Kasturbhai Lalbhai).
6. The Reorganisation of the Machinery of Government (Gopalaswami Ayyangar), 1949.
7. Estimates Committee's Second Report on Reorganisation of the Secretariat and Departments of the Government of India (First Lok Sabha), 1950-51.
8. Report on Public Administration (A.D. Gorwala), 1951.
9. Report on the Efficient Conduct of State Enterprises (Gorwala), 1951.
10. The Machinery of Government—Improvement of Efficiency (R.A. Gopalaswamy), 1952.
11. Public Administration in India—Report of a Survey (Paul H. Appleby), 1953.
12. Estimates Committee's Ninth Report on Administrative, Financial and other Reforms (First Lok Sabha), 1953-58.
13. Re-examination of India's Administrative System with special reference to administration of Government's Industrial and Commercial Enterprises (Appleby), 1956.
14. The Railway Corruption Enquiry Committee (J.B. Kripalani), 1955.
15. The Public Service (Qualification for Recruitment) Committee (A. Ramaswami Mudaliar), 1956.

16. The Commission of Enquiry on Emoluments and Conditions of Service of Central Government Employees (Jagannath Das), 1959.
17. The Staff Welfare Review Committee (Fateh Singh), 1961.
18. Indian and State Administrative Services and Problems of District Administration (V.T. Krishnamachari), 1952.
19. The Committee on Prevention of Corruption (K. Santhanam), 1964.
20. Estimates Committee's Ninety-third Report on Public Services (Third Lok Sabha), 1966.
21. The Administrative Reform Commission, 1966—70 (It submitted twenty reports. Besides, there were study team reports).
22. The Third Pay Commission, 1973.
23. The Committee on Recruitment and Selection (D.S. Kothari).
24. The Fourth Central Pay Commission, 1986 (P.N. Shinghal).
25. The National Police Commission (Dharma Vira, 1979).
26. The Commission on Centre-State Relations (Justice K.S. Sarkaria), 1987.
27. The Committee to Review the Scheme of the Civil Services Examination (Satish Chandra), 1989.
28. The Tax Reforms Committee (Raja J. Chelliah), 1991.

Equally pressing is the need felt for revamping the state-level administrative system. State governments have been setting up administrative reform committees

from time to time. These bodies easily fall into two broad categories. Many committees are set up with very wide terms of reference and they look into the whole gamut of issues and problems which may take them even to the level of district administration and local government. The list below enumerates the administrative reform committees set up by the various state governments which come under this category.

### COMMITTEES ON STATE LEVEL ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM

S.No.	Name of State	Name of the Committee	Year
1.	Bengal	Bengal Administration Enquiry Committee (chairman: Sir Archibald Rowlands)	1945
2.	Bombay	Administrative Enquiry Committee (chairman: D.G. Karve)	1948
3.	Uttar Pradesh	The Disciplinary Proceedings Enquiry Committee (chairman: Govind Ballabh Pant)	1954
4.	Rajasthan	The Administration Enquiry Committee (chairman: B.S. Mehta)	1956
5.	Mysore	The Mysore Administration Enquiry Committee (chairman: A.D. Gorwala)	1958
6.	Orissa	Orissa Administration Enquiry Committee (chairman: S. Das)	1958

S.No.	Name of State	Name of the Committee	Year
7.	Kerala	The Administrative Reform Committee (chairman: E.M.S. Namboodiripad)	1958
8.	Andhra Pradesh	Administrative Reform Committee (chairman: K.M. Unnithan)	1960
9.	Mysore	The Mysore Resources and Economy Committee (chairman: A.G. Ramachandra Rao)	1962
10.	Rajasthan	The Administrative Reform Committee (chairman: H.C. Mathur)	1963
11.	Maharashtra	The Administrative Reorganisation Committee (chairman: S.K. Wankhede)	1965
12.	Andhra Pradesh	Administrative Reform Commission (chairman: N. Ramachandra Reddy)	1965
13.	Punjab	The Punjab Administrative Reform Commission (chairman: K. Hanumanthaiya)	1966
14.	Kerala	The Administrative Reorganisation and Economy Committee (chairman: M.K. Vellodi)	1967
15.	Maharashtra	Reorganisation of Maharashtra Administration (chairman: M.N. Heble)	1971
16.	Madhya Pradesh	The Administrative Reform Commission (chairman: Narsing Rao Dixit)	1972



S.No.	Name of State	Name of the Committee	Year
17.	Tamil Nadu	The Administrative Reform Committee (chairman: T.V. Varghese)	1973
18.	Uttar Pradesh	Working Group on Structural, Procedural and Administrative Reform (chairman: A.P. Dixit) Commission on District Level Administration (J.S. Shukla, 1986)	1973
19.	West Bengal	Administrative Reform Committee (chairman: Ashok Mitra)	1983

The second category of administrative reform committees set up by state governments includes bodies set up specifically to examine and recommend on district level administration. Punjab, Madras (now Tamil Nadu), Uttar Pradesh and Bombay each established district administration reform committees, as follows:

1. Report on the Reorganisation of District Administration (A.L. Fletcher), Punjab, 1953.
2. Report of the (Madras) District Revenue Administration Enquiry Committee, Madras, 1955.
3. Reorganisation of Collectorates (K.K. Dass), Uttar Pradesh, 1956.
4. Report on the Reorganisation of District Revenue Offices (Pimputkar), Madras, 1959.
5. Report of the Commission on District Level Administration (J.D. Shukla), U.P., 1986.

Local government, rural and urban, is today an integral part of the governmental system. It falls under the jurisdiction of state governments, which are respon-

sible for its creation and sustenance. Many states have set up committees to seek advice on strengthening local government both rural and urban. But some states do not make use of this mechanism and instead use the already existing department for purposes of control, supervision and reform of local bodies. Though local government is, constitutionally, the state governments' direct responsibility, New Delhi takes an inordinate amount of interest in the subject, even though this has declined sharply since the end of the Nehru era. It is also true that rural local government was active and energetic as long as the Centre took an interest in it. Karnataka, West Bengal, Maharashtra and Gujarat, however, have themselves taken a lead in promoting panchayati raj institutions. The Ramakrishna Hegde government in Karnataka has made 'mandal' the pivot institution in the panchayati raj structure and decentralised, apparently, adequate administrative and financial powers to this level. The Leftist government in West Bengal has not accepted 'mandal' as the effective unit but all the same has strengthened the panchayati raj institution administratively and financially and has made it a powerful local government. The list of various committees on local government—rural and urban—is given below:

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM COMMITTEES

### Urban Government

#### Appointed by Centre

1. Local Finance Enquiry Committee, 1951 (Chairman: P.K. Wattal).
2. Taxation Enquiry Commission, 1954 (Chairman: John Matthai).
3. Committee on the Training of Municipal Employees, 1963 (Chairman: Nur-ud-din Ahmed).

4. Rural-Urban Relationship Committee, 1966 (Chairman: A.P. Jain).
5. Committee on Budgetary Reform in Municipal Administration, 1974 (Chairman: Girijapati Mukharji).
6. Study Group on Constitution, Powers and Laws of Urban Local Bodies and Municipal Corporation, 1982 (Chairman: K.N. Sahaya).

### Appointed by States

#### Assam

1. Municipal Finance Committee, Assam, Delhi, 1967 (Chairman: M. Sultan).

#### Delhi

2. Delhi Municipal Organisation Enquiry Committee, 1948 (Chairman: K.B. Mian Abdul Aziz).
3. Commission on Finances of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi and the New Delhi Municipal Committee, Delhi, 1970 (Chairman: R.R. Morarka).

#### Gujarat

4. Municipal Rationalisation Committee, Gujarat, 1961 (Chairman: Maneklal Shah).
5. Grants-in-Aid Code Committee for Municipalities and Municipal Corporations, Gujarat, 1964 (Chairman: F.N. Rana).

#### Karnataka

6. Municipal Finance Enquiry Committee, Karnataka, 1975 (Chairman: M.M. Kharge).

#### Kerala

7. Municipal Grants Enquiry Committee, Kerala, 1965 (Chairman: P.D. Kuruvilla).

## Madhya Pradesh

8. Urban Local Self-Government Committee, Madhya Pradesh, 1959 (Chairman: S.S. Joshi).

## Maharashtra

9. Committee for Unification of Acts relating to Municipalities in Maharashtra State, Maharashtra, 1964 (Chairman: Rafiq Zakaria).
10. Municipal Finance Commission, Maharashtra, 1974 (Chairman: B.P. Patel).

## Punjab

11. Local Government (Urban) Enquiry Committee, Punjab, 1957 (Chairman: G.S. Wajwa).

## Tamil Nadu

12. White Paper on the Reform of the Local Administration in Madras State, 1950.

## Rural Government

## Central Government

1. Team for the Study of Community Projects and National Extension Service (Chairman: Balwantray G. Mehta), 1957.
2. Study Team on Panchayats: Fifth Evaluation Report (Planning Commission), 1958.
3. Committee on Rationalisation of Panchayat Statistics (Convenor: V.R. Rao), 1960.
4. Working Group on Panchayats and Cooperatives (Chairman: S.D. Misra), 1961.
5. Study Team on Panchayati Raj Administration (Chairman: V. Iswaran), 1961.
6. Study Team on Nyaya Panchayats (Chairman:

- G.R. Rajgopal), 1962.
7. Study Team on the Position of Gram Sabha in Panchayati Raj Movement (Chairman: R.R. Diwakar), 1963.
  8. Study Group on Budgeting and Accounting Procedure of Panchayati Raj Institutions (Chairman: M. Ramakrishnayya), 1963.
  9. Study Team on Panchayati Raj Finances (Chairman: K. Santhanam), 1963.
  10. Committee on Panchayati Raj Elections (Chairman: K. Santhanam), 1965.
  11. Study Team on the Audit and Accounts of Panchayati Raj Bodies (Chairman: R.K. Khanna), 1965.
  12. Evaluation Committee on Panchayati Raj Training Centres (Chairman: G. Ramachandran), 1966.
  13. Study Team on the Role and Functions of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Planning and Development (Planning Commission, Committee on Plan Projects), 1966.
  14. Study Team on Involvement of Community Development Agency and Panchayati Raj Institutions in the Implementation of Basic Land Reform Measures (Chairman: V. Ramanathan), 1969.
  15. Working Group for Formulation of Fifth Five year Plan on Community Development and Panchayati Raj (Chairman: N. Ramakrishnayya), 1972.
  16. Committee on Community Development and Panchayati Raj (Chairman: Smt. Daya Choubey), 1976.
  17. Committee on Panchayati Raj Institutions (Chairman: Asoka Mehta), 1978.

18. Committee to Review the Existing Administrative Arrangements for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation Programmes (Chairman: G.V.K. Rao), 1985.

## State Governments

### Andhra Pradesh

1. High Power Committee on the Reorganisation of Panchayat Samiti, Blocks and Allied Matters (Chairman: M. Purushottam Rai), Andhra Pradesh, 1964.
2. High Power Committee on Panchayati Raj, 1969.
3. High Power Committee on Panchayati Raj (Chairman: Narasimham), 1971.
4. High Power Committee on Panchayati Raj (Chairman: C. Narasimham), 1972.
5. State Committee on Panchayati Raj Institutions, 1981.

### Assam

6. Study Team on Panchayati Raj (Chairman: K.P. Tripathy), 1963.
7. Sub Committee on Amendment to the Bihar Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad Act, Bihar, 1973.

### Gujarat

8. Committee on Democratic Decentralisation (Chairman: Rasikbhai U. Parikh), 1961.
9. Gujarat Panchayats Act Amendment Committee (Chairman: Jadavjibhai K. Mody), 1965.
10. Study Group on Administration of Revenue, Agriculture and Panchayati Raj Departments, 1966.

11. Working Group on District Administration (Chairman: Rasik Lal Shukla), 1967.
12. High Level Team on District Administration, 1972.
13. High Level Team on Panchayati Raj (Chairman: Zindubhai Darji), 1973.

#### Haryana

14. Ad-hoc Committee on the Working of Panchayati Raj (Chairman: Maru Singh), 1972.

#### Himachal Pradesh

15. High Level Committee on Panchayati Raj Finance, 1975.
16. Committee on Panchayati Raj (Chairman: Hardyal Singh), 1965.

#### Karnataka

17. Reorganisation of Government Officers consequent on the Democratic Decentralisation (Chairman: Kondaki Basappa), 1963.
18. Joint Select Committee on the Mysore Panchayati Raj Bill, 1964 (Chairman: Ramkrishna Hegde), 1969.

#### Kerala

19. Select Committee on the Kerala Panchayati Raj Bill, 1967 (Chairman: M.P.M. Ahmad Kurekal), 1969.

#### Madhya Pradesh

20. Rural Local Government Committee, 1956.

#### Maharashtra

21. Committee on Democratic Decentralisation (Chairman: V.P. Naik), 1961.

22. Committee on the Role of Panchayati Raj Bodies in Agricultural Production Programme (Chairman: R.C. Joshi), 1966.
23. Committee on State Control of Panchayati Raj Institutions, 1967.
24. Committee on Purchases and Allocation of Machinery between the State and Local Sector Agencies (Chairman: Lonkar), 1968.
25. Committee to suggest measures for utilisation of the various Funds vesting in the Zila Parishads (Chairman: A.U. Shaik), 1970.
26. Committee to Suggest Simplification of the Executive and Accounting Procedures Applicable to works in the Local Sector (Chairman: E.B. Nimbalkal), 1970.
27. Committee on Finance of Panchayati Raj, 1970.
28. Evaluation Committee on Panchayati Raj (Chairman: L.N. Bongirdar), 1971.
29. Evaluation Committee on Panchayati Raj, 1974.

#### Orissa

30. Gram Panchayats Enquiry Committee, 1958.
31. Panchayat Reorganisation Commission (Chairman: R.K. Mishra), 1960.
32. Committee for Administration Reorganisation of Panchayati Raj, 1964.
33. Panchayati Reorganisation Commission (Chairman: J.K. Misra), 1966.

#### Punjab

34. Study Team on Panchayati Raj (Chairman: Rajinder Singh), 1966.



35. Study Team on Panchayati Raj and Animal Husbandry (Chairman: P.S. Badal), 1968.

### Rajasthan

36. Working of Panchayati Raj (Evaluation Organisation—Cabinet Secretariat), 1961.
37. Working of Panchayati Raj (Evaluation Organisation—Cabinet Secretariat), 1962.
38. Study Team on Panchayati Raj (Chairman: Sadiq Ali), 1964.
39. Committee on Primary Education in Panchayati Raj, 1969.
40. High Power Committee on Panchayati Raj (Chairman: Girdhari Lal Vyas), 1973.

### Tamil Nadu

41. Working Group on District Administration, 1967.
42. Panchayati Education Finance Enquiry Committee, 1971.
43. Administrative Reform Commission on Panchayat Development Administration (Chairman: T.A. Varghese), 1973.

### Tripura

44. High Power Committee on Panchayati Raj, 1976.

### Uttar Pradesh

45. Committee for Evaluation and on Public Participation (Chairman: Govind Sahai), 1959.
46. Study Team on Panchayati Raj Resources (Chairman: Kailash Prakash), 1965.
47. Study Team on Panchayati Raj Leadership (Chairman: Ram Murthy), 1965.

## West Bengal

48. State Control of Panchayati Raj Institutions (Directorate of Evaluation), 1968.
49. Committee Constituted by the Chief Minister to Work Out the Details of Funds and Personnel to be transferred to Zila Parishads, Panchayat Samitis and the Gram Panchayats for Integrated Rural Development (Sengupta, Sen and Kutty), 1978.

### MAJOR REFORM AREAS

The number of committees of administrative reform at the three levels of government is most impressive: the recommendations made are as numerous as leaves in a tree. The foremost need of Indian public administration is attitudinal and behavioural change on the part of the civil service in addition to basic structural change. Even after forty-five years of independence, the civil service in India continues to be aloof, arrogant and domineering. Attitudinal and behavioural change is easy to wish for but difficult to bring about. In the ultimate analysis, the bureaucratic attitude towards society is largely a function of the market forces. In a full-employment economy characterised by less State controls the public is bound to expect and demand a higher level of treatment from its civil servants.

The country's civil service lacks a sense of service to society and a large number of its members view a contact with the citizens, however remote, as an opportunity for harassing him, and if possible for extracting bribes from him. Civil servants must become civil in their dealings and must regard themselves as the servants of society. Unionisation among the lower level public personnel frightens the higher level officers from taking punitive action against them.

Most public organisations, it is common knowledge, suffer from excess of staff, which is injurious to work efficiency and inflates the salary bill. The over-legislated society in India begets its own problems and some laws at least are a drag today on societal well being. There is, today, a legislation which lays down that shops and commercial establishments must close by a particular hour. There might have been a justification for enacting such a law in the distant past, but in today's situation it hardly serves any useful purpose: on the other hand, it entails lot of needless paper work, breeds corruption and is an instrument of harassment of the self-employed business people engaged in hard work. The government inspector enforcing this law has apparently only one motto: to harass the shop-owners in his jurisdiction and to force them to fix a monthly 'allowance' for him. Laws like this must be removed from the statute book. Similarly, there are public organisations which are notorious for the corruption they indulge in, the sales tax department being easily the foremost among them. This department is a byword for corruption, and the daily pickings of even the lowest clerk run into over a thousand rupees. Wisdom lies in replacing the sales tax with excise or some other simpler, less vexatious tax. Reform, in other words, requires liquidation of agencies also. India must adopt the concept of sunset legislation. Just as under-government is undesirable so is over-government: it inhibits people's initiative and independence and makes them over-dependent.

Public administration in India, it needs to be stressed, has taken up tasks which, strictly speaking, need not travel to this sector. The government, for example, is manufacturing bread for the people ('Modern Bread') and thus it is competing with private enterprise engaged in bread-making. It is also manufacturing televisions. Are these the legitimate functions of a

government? Government is today producing and selling electricity, and most state electricity boards are not only under-producing but are also running under heavy losses. On the other hand, the Tatas (a private sector industrial house) are managing electricity in Bombay and there is neither shortage nor loss. The point to be emphasised is that the State in India bites off more than it can chew. It takes up tasks which it need not, for these rightly fall within the realm of private enterprise. By assuming such functions, government is mixing non-essentials with the essentials. Unable to produce enough electricity, it has yet denied permission to others to come forward and make up the deficiency. A lasting piece of reform would be to discourage proliferation of government agencies and personnel and to motivate the existing ones to become optimally effective.

Field administration in India needs to be given much more importance than at present. The policy-making and supervising levels in administration have shown little concern to understand, much less appreciate, the problems encountered in the field. An extreme degree of centralisation of authority causes confusion and delay, and blocks administrative efficiency. The working conditions in the field are harsh, made all the more unfavourable in the absence of an effective recognition system for the industrious. The turnover of officers is high, which adversely affects continuity in administration. Risk-taking, so central to administration, is frowned upon.

It has been customary to discuss corruption while dealing with a subject like administrative reform. It is equally common for the discussion to follow the usual path and conclude with a set of recommendations including one for the setting up of an ombudsmanic institution. In 1951, A.D. Gorwala was pained to find growing corruption in public administration. Acharya Kripalani

bemoaned it in his report on corruption in the Railways in 1955. In the mid-sixties, the Santhanam Committee on the Prevention of Corruption felt alarmed at its wild growth and made a number of recommendations for its control. The point to be noted here is that the disease is becoming deeper and deeper, in contemptuous disregard of these committees and their deliberations. Today, corruption in public administration has acquired menacing proportions and it threatens to become nearly a way of life. Indeed, if corruption is curbed and controlled, administrative reform would have already been substantially accomplished for most Indians. While the institution of Lokpal and Lokayukta is necessary, the ruling elite must set an example before society. The prevalent consumerist culture, too, needs to be decried in the strongest terms. One must take an integrated view of administrative reform.

Mention at this place also needs to be made of an effective organisation devoted to innovation and creativity in public administration. The existing O & M units are good as far as they go, but they do not go far enough. Public administration of a large country like India needs administrative philosophers and theoreticians of first-rate quality.

Implementation of the proposals of administrative reform must receive the highest measure of attention of reformers. This must be underlined, for this aspect has not received due care: implementation is just taken for granted, which reminds one of the story of 'the mice and the owl'. Some mice went to the wisest creature, the owl and said, we are menaced by a cat, and prayed for a remedy. The owl was in an obliging mood and said: 'My advice is: you yourselves become the cat.' The mice smiled, and went away cheerful. They pondered over the matter deep and long, but failed to become the cat. Thereupon they again went to the owl, and said: 'Sire,

we are grateful to you for your advice. But kindly tell us how to become the cat.' The owl growled and replied: 'I only give advice; implementation is your concern.'

### PRECONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

I have devoted a considerable part of my professional life to studying the theory and practice of administrative reform. As Chief Research Officer in the central Ministry of Home Affairs, I was rather closely associated with the planning and managing of administrative reform. I also worked with the Administrative Reform Commission set up by the Government of India in 1966. I was member of an administrative reform committee set up by a state government to improve its administration. These experiences have taught me that administrative reform is very difficult to bring about, more so in India with its long, powerful traditions of colonial bureaucracy.

Whatever the form of effort, several prerequisites are essential for the success of administrative reform. More important among them are:

1. First and foremost, top-level political leadership must evince unquestioning support to reform. This is vital—to enable those responsible for reform to overcome resistance and ensure implementation. Political leadership must arouse and sustain public support for administrative change.
2. The chief executive, under whom the exercise of administrative reform is being carried out, must not only fully understand it but also extend all possible encouragement to the personnel concerned. What is more, he must fully bear the responsibility for the outcome.
3. Administrative reform is a continuous exercise and it is primarily the responsibility of the head of

an organisation to ensure optimum efficiency and citizen-orientation (particularly if this is a public dealing agency). This must be made absolutely clear: administrative reform is no substitute for the line officer's neglect of his duty.

4. Administrative reform is apt to meet resistance from the career bureaucracy, which is an institution of formidable strength. As any meaningful piece of administrative change is apt to reduce the authority and prestige of the bureaucracy which originated in a colonial system, its resistance becomes all the more persistent and resolute. This calls for a special effort from the political leadership, which must also set out to mobilise citizen support for reform.
5. Administrative reform is bound to remain incomplete without an adequate follow-up programme whose basic purpose is to ensure that the outcome corresponds with the originally visualised objectives.
6. There must be government-wide concern for administrative reform and, as in the Olympics, for ever better records of performance.

## XV

### AGENDA FOR THE FUTURE

India can never be accused of giving scanty consideration to the problem of change in its administrative system. Rather, both its concept and content have received enrichment and extension and today, in the range of problems studied and solutions offered India's achievement must be rated singularly impressive. Administrative reformers raised, and offered answers to a large number of questions covering both the traditional administration and development administration. The more important ones follow:

- How should the machinery of government be reorganised?
- How should procedures of work be improved?
- How should financial administration be conducted in the context of planning?
- How should planning be organised at different levels of government?
- How should better coordination be secured between various agencies?
- What should be the relationship between ministers and civil servants?
- How should the various processes of personnel administration such as recruitment, training, placement, performance appraisal, promotion, salary-fixation, etc., be improved?
- What should be the staffing policies in government, particularly at the senior levels?
- How should the grievances of the public personnel be redressed?
- How should corruption be controlled in public administration?
- How should citizens' grievances be redressed?



- How should waste and extravagance in public administration be controlled?
- How should public undertakings be organised?
- How should project planning be organised and control mechanisms designed?
- How should plan progress be monitored and programme evaluation be carried out?

One is thus easily impressed with the large stock of knowledge about what needs to be done to make the country's public administration a fit instrument for the tasks set out for it. The recommendations for change in the administrative system are as numerous as the proverbial leaves in the neem tree. Almost everyone has ample suggestions up his sleeve in the matter of reform of public administration. This is because today's State impinges on everyone recurringly, and what is more, the intensity of State-citizen contact is apt to increase in the years to come. The curious thing is that even those who cry themselves hoarse against delays and other evils of public administration in effect clamour for more of it! Leaving aside the remedial measures suggested (impromptu) by the lay citizen, the work done in this field by governmental committees and commissions would leave no one unimpressed. An overseas commentator of the Indian administrative system compliments India for the prolificity of thoughts on this matter. He observes:

... with respect to the total blueprint for change, developments in Public Administration in India in terms of coherence, intellectual content, awareness of realities, balance between tradition and modernisation are probably unequalled in Asia and deserve a high place when compared with similar developments in older nations of the West.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ralph Braibanti, 'Reflections on Bureaucratic Reform in India', in R. Braibanti and Joseph J. Spengler (eds.), *Administration and Economic Development in India*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1963.

Such a testimonial may indeed be greatly embarrassing to India. Though the country has appointed a large number of committees on matters relating to administrative reform since attaining independence and has to its credit impressive achievements in several fields, her public administration cannot be said to have benefited very largely from them. Today, not many would claim that the country's administration is in reasonably good health. In view of the scale or volume of know-how available in the field of administrative reform the impact has been rather marginal, and the citizens by and large regard public administration as unresponsive, wooden, at times even inhuman. This is really a matter for concern. The true measure of public administration is Man. Under democratic as well as populist pressures, the public administration of the country is made to chew more and more, and thus it impinges more and more on human happiness.

### **LACK OF COMMITMENT AT THE TOP**

Surprising though it may seem, the foremost reason for absence of any large-scale reform in the country's system of administration is the lack of commitment of the political leadership and the senior bureaucracy. The surprise turns into astonishment when one recalls that this group misses no opportunity to call for institutional and behavioural changes in public administration. Yet the fact is that the top-level political and administrative functionaries are profoundly unconcerned with administrative reform. This has come about precisely because they really feel no need or urgency for appropriate changes in public administration. There could possibly be several reasons for their apathy towards this problem. The senior bureaucracy is overcommitted to the prevalent administrative ethos, and unless it is powerfully pressurised, will either not move, or move slowly, even in circles. It is frankly conservative, even status-

quo(s) in matters of administrative changes. The critical element in transforming the country's administrative set-up is therefore, the top political leadership. Unfortunately, its interest in administrative reform too remains confined to public speech-making only. This subject is, in its eyes, an utterly unexciting topic, not a direct begetter of votes. The political leadership is more in love with apparently spectacular and publicity yielding events such as inaugurations, than with sedate matters like administrative reform which necessitates a deep knowledge of the details of administration. Secondly, it does not usually have a true comprehension of the nature and implications of reform, Thirdly, it has had no direct exposure to administrative delays and cussedness and has, therefore, no first-hand knowledge of the gravity of this problem. Or it chooses to forget it while in office. This opens the door to another extremely disturbing facet of Indian public administration—VIPism.

Indian administration is unbelievably sensitive, swift and efficient when a demand comes from the 'VIPs' or those who have proper 'contacts'. The ministers, members of parliament and state legislatures, senior civil servants, more articulate journalists, influential academics, etc.—all constituting the 'power elite'—do not have to put up with normal administrative harassments as they, as a rule, receive preferential and favourable attention from the civil servants. This is aptly conveyed in the bureaucratic saying: 'You show me the man, and I shall quote the rule!' It is precisely this group of society which because of its vantage position is in a position to bring about administrative reform in the country. But the VIPs do not experience any 'insolence of office' and they thrive in the splendour and security of the system. Their concern for change in public administration, therefore, lacks genuineness, hardly rising above the level of rhetoric. The need for reform dawns on them only when

they go out of office, for then they have to manage their affairs themselves. It is not a mere coincidence that the most pathetic wailings on administrative weaknesses as well as the most radical suggestions for reform in India have emanated from retired civil servants and politicians out of office. While in office, the VIPs are too busy to find time to realise that their status and authority are not inherent in them. Draped in brief authority, they tend to regard it as an eternal verity, and use it, not to support a larger cause like administrative reform but to gain preferential treatment in matters of purely personal concern. Many of them come to know the true state of the administrative system only after their retirement! The country's administrative system would have been transformed if they had taken a genuine and sustained interest in the matter while in service. They would have had the lever of office to carry the recommendations through.

### CORRUPTION

Another enemy of administrative reform in the country is corruption, though the latter alone should be a good enough provocation for demanding changes in public administration. In India, corruption has the effect of dulling and dimming a desire for administrative reform. Those directly discomfited by irksome procedures are generally inclined to overcome them by bribing public officials who then themselves temporarily 'reform' the concerned bunch of procedures and get the clients' work done expeditiously. When the machinery of government is notoriously slow-moving and procedures of work are cumbersome, a certain amount of delay and vexation become inevitable and members of the bureaucracy, when properly humoured, are pleased to flex their muscles and expedite decision-making under proper inducements. 'Speed money' is thus seen in practice to perform the job of administrative reformers. This view, however,

is highly short-sighted. It is the confusion which permits corrupters to grease the wheels of administration and get things done according to their design. If public administration was reformed, little room would be left for selfish manipulations. Some people have thus come to acquire a vested interest in keeping public administration in a state of disarray and disjointedness. But this must not continue. If a society fails to rectify this aberration in the normal course the ill will multiply—and may have to be fought by extraordinary devices like terrorism, even revolution.

It is arguable that the necessary leadership in regard to administrative change can come from the upper and middle classes of society. While the VIPs get their work done taking advantage of their special political or official status, the members of these classes do it by taking recourse to corruption—that is, by greasing the palms of the public functionaries. Today, the rich and the affluent have necessarily to come in increased contact with public functionaries to keep their business surviving, even flourishing. They have sophisticated the art of winning over the public functionaries who have to decide their cases. For this purpose, they maintain guest houses, entertain the ministers and civil servants and are very meticulous in pandering to their weaknesses and requirements. It is a regular practice in Indian business houses, to earmark a sizeable budget for entertainment. Thus they make the slow-moving public administration function faster and usually according to the 'programme' as fed by them. They engage influence-yielding individuals including academics as advisers and consultants in their organisations and create a favourable image. They even own newspapers, and film and women's magazines and thus use the mass media to create a climate congenial to their interests. Today the businessman, the politician and the civil servants have

by and large learnt to accommodate each other! The 'con-man' has come to command a striking visibility. An industrialist boasted before this author: 'You show me the man, and I will quote his price.'

The middle class, too, has acquiesced into the system although it continues to be a sharp critic of administration. Members of this class do not ordinarily have the time or the patience to indulge in sophistication of the type characteristic of the rich. Their *modus operandi* is rather crude but business-like: bribe the public functionary who has to do the work. In fact, for a large number of common items of work done by the lower level public functionaries the amount of illegal gratification has been standardised in many parts of the country. This saves the time of both the parties! Moreover, corruption is a compensating and self-financing mechanism for the middle class. If a person bribes a public functionary to get his work done, he too may lose no opportunity in fencing his 'client' when he is at the giving end! Many have evened out the extra burden by the practice of 'give and take'. The most hard hit, regrettably, is the poorer class which, while it has to bribe the officials, has to absorb the extra burden itself.

It is obviously wrong to attribute the charge of corruption to the 'whole' civil service, although it is more widespread among the lower level functionaries and is more heavily concentrated in areas of administration involving extensive public dealings. The point made here is that an absence of administrative reform is itself a very powerful impetus to corruption through the mechanism of which citizens make administration tick, and in their favour.

But recourse to corruption as a device for securing the needed flexibility and change in administration is unwholesome and is bound to progressively alienate the citizens. It has, therefore, to be firmly checked and con-

trolled, which is possible only when white collar crimes are effectively handled and their perpetrators are swiftly brought to book. Among the prerequisites of administrative reform in the country is the elimination of 'black money' which has spawned a parallel economy in the country, the estimates of which vary from Rs. 1,00,000 crore to any astronomical figure. Black money has a most damaging effect on the moral fibre of society. Integrity is at a discount; an honest tax-payer is made to bear the burden of the tax-evader; and the pinch is felt in spending the ill-gotten money. With this easy money some people expect to keep public administration at their beck and call. In other words, administration already stands 'reformed' in their eyes. It is a deformed administration nevertheless, and the political leadership must shed its complacency in this regard and set out to rectify it.

### CIVIL SERVICE UNIONISATION

There are other obstacles on the way as well, which tend to make the business of reforms difficult if not intractable. One such impediment is the growing unionisation among the public personnel themselves. In India the public functionaries at the lower levels of administration are fairly well organised into staff associations but the latter crave more for rights than duties and have not only shown no concern for administrative reform but have eroded order and discipline in many public organisations. Although the rules governing these bodies prohibit their taking any interest in individual cases, in practice they often adopt militant postures. The result is that supervisory personnel think it prudent to ignore minor infringement or neglect of duties by the lower level personnel. Unionisation of the public personnel in India has not only dimmed the prospect of reform but has injected slackness and inefficiency into many organisations. What is more, it is threatening to become a mafia

in at least some organisations. The senior officers in many organisations find themselves helpless in the face of recurring indiscipline of the lower categories of personnel. Time-honoured tools like supervision and control have begun to be neglected, or at best only perfunctorily performed.

A disproportionately high time of senior management is today taken up in disposing of matters which are of a housekeeping nature, leaving them with little or severely limited time to formulate medium and long-range plans or to attend to citizens' problems. Problems of postings, transfers, promotions, regularisation of personnel, granting of allowances and the like take away too much time of the senior bureaucracy. One often gets a feeling that many public organisations have come to exist for the personnel working in them and have little free time to give to the realisation of larger goals. They are, today, close to becoming *pinjrapoles* existing mostly, if not only, for their employees. The public purpose, which ought to be their real task, slips into the background.

India may thus seem to run parallel administrations, one for the VIPs, another for those who believe in getting things done by bribing officers. The fact that VIPism and bribes induce public administration to work faster is proof enough of the latter being potentially efficient and effective.

As happens in human situations, not all public functionaries can be subjected to similar criticism. It may perhaps be reasonable to divide the civil service in India into three broad categories. There are public functionaries who are highly dedicated, conscientious and morally upright. Any administrative system would feel proud to possess them. The second category includes functionaries who ordinarily like to act fairly and promptly and in conformity with established rules and regulations. They neither collude with the influence-ped-



lars and deviants nor intend to collide with them; they read the 'weather report' rather minutely and trim their sails suitably. The third category includes functionaries who have a very low motivation to achieve organisational goals, are inclined to shirk work and do it only when suitably induced. The wheels of public administration are kept continuously in motion by the first two categories of public functionaries.

It must also be mentioned here that the rule, under which the monetary allocations to departments not spent lose their validity with the close of the financial year, has the effect of keeping public personnel busy and the wheels of administration moving. Though there is unwise concentration of public spending in the last months of the financial year and though a part of it is always infructuous, the financial principle of the rule of lapse has contributed to the country's progress in various fields even though indirectly and remotely. In short, while there are barriers to reforms there are a few in-built mechanisms both human and procedural, in Indian administration which act as accelerators and facilitators, even if crude and not very effective, of efforts to realise the organisational objectives.

Administrative reform, it would emerge from the present study, is a slow and complex process, and is, moreover, in a state of continuous interaction with society. Reform in public administration is bound to remain only marginally effective without reform of the political system, and reform in both these spheres is not really possible without a simultaneous reform in the country's economic system as well. Equally vital are the lobbies and watchdog organisations whose tasks should be to keep the country's public administration under surveillance, suggest suitable changes and mobilise support in favour of their demands.