

ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS OF THE NEXT FIFTEEN YEARS

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The futuristic approach to the administration of a vast country of wide diversities like India has its inherent limitations and in any eventuality, has to avoid the realm of speculation to achieve a measure of objectivity. Administrative problems are, by no means, fortuitous to be subjects of prognostication although they can be brought within futurist perspective for the purposes of examination. Two significant factors directly relevant to the major problems of an administration, are the socio-cultural environment and the political pattern in which it operates. The primary function of an administration is to evolve and maintain a social order in accordance with the ideology upon which the superstructure of the state is erected.

If an administration has been successful in reorganising and regulating society on the basis of the professed ideological tenets or cherished value system, it will find itself in a relatively advantageous position to have a realistic conception of its problems and the means of seeking solutions to them. The paradox of India is that the Westminster model representative system from its incaptive level has been functioning within a religionised feudal society and little has been done by the administration to effect changes in order to transform it in consonance with the ethics and ethos of democracy.

The administration has hardly convinced itself that for the unity and all-round progress of a plural and infinitely fragmented society as India, no other ideological framework than democracy is suitable, and there is no alternative to the existing political system. The attempts made so far to resolve the conflict between society and political democracy have not

yielded the anticipated results as they have ignored or underestimated the other equally powerful phases of the caste hierarchy, namely, political, religious and social.

The failure of the economic programmes especially aimed at ameliorating the plight of the weaker sections to a considerable extent is attributable to the persistent social resistances built up against them. The success of a representative system as democracy is largely dependent upon the strength of social rationality. A people becomes socially rational only if it imbibes such values as truth, reason, freedom and justice. The biggest challenge that the administration in India faces since the attainment of independence, has been the question of resolving the conflict between society and democracy.

Any perceptible social change or social transformation indispensable for the successful functioning of democracy or the adoption of democracy as the way of life can be brought about only by well-thought-out and well-planned policies both long term and short term. Traditionally, policy-making in India has been ad hoc, sometimes haphazard, often conditioned by expediency, overwhelmingly with routine casualness, entirely generalist-oriented and detached from organisational context and even social environment.

In the USA and in all west European countries, administration in the post-war years has undergone significant structural modifications and functional reorganisation so as to make policy-making a collective or collegiate effort relying purely on science and specialisation. Although political expediency or compulsions may rarely seek to determine policy options, there is enlarged scope for an enhanced emphasis on policy analysis. In India, however, mainly on account of the generalist legacy left by the British, there is a persistent resistance in introducing change in the administration to recast the policy process to make it on scientific lines and in the light of developmental requirements.

Policy essentially is political, and political adequacy and political competency are indispensable for its evolution and implementation. In a parliamentary system, ministers individually and the Cabinet jointly are responsible for policies which normally represent and are directed to realise the ideological goals of their party or parties. Therefore, if poli-

cies are to be rational and realistic, parties, especially those in power, must have highly inspiring ideologies to adhere to high politics and reorganise society with determination.

Political enlightenment alone can sustain ideological conviction to its realisable end forging out progressive policies. It is equally the dynamics of giving creative directions to bureaucratic experience and knowledge in the sphere of both policy formulation and execution. The psychic change through the imbibing of democratic value which is a precondition to effect material alteration essential in the structure of society will be possible only if constructive policies are evolved and imaginatively implemented. This demands a new approach altogether to policy-making in India. A new orientation of policy planning is a vital problem that calls for earnest attention on the part of the administration in India.

Over the decades, especially after the achievement of national freedom, there has been widespread use of violence by socio-political forces in almost every sphere of human activity as a means to achieve certain ends. It predicates that there is a loss of reason and tolerance in society, but it provokes counter-violence by the administration, perhaps at times, at least in a measure disproportionate to the situation. Bureaucratic responses to public demands and grievances, political pre-disposition to treat controversial issues with the meanness of partisan spirit and the reluctance or refusal on the part of authorities to use democratic alternatives to pacify the public fury on legitimately sensitive issues are primarily responsible for the state resorting to violence against its citizens.

Violence and counter-violence if not resolved by appropriate and lasting measures will indubitably enfeeble the foundations of a democratic state and will subject the nascent nationalism to serious erosion. The liberal values which were tenderly fostered by the national leaders who were, by and large, the products of Western education, are increasingly invaded by the new brand of brash politicians who hardly have made any sacrifices for freedom, by denying inner party democracy, organising goons and hoodlums to make attack on their adversaries and the press and unleashing the police power for personal advantages.

Both populism and political adventurism have made serious inroads into public peace and tranquility and human dignity. Instead of building social power by devoted service to the people as the means for obtaining political power, politicians invariably use political power to consolidate their social authority which inevitably leads to the misuse of administrative machinery, flagging the morale of bureaucracy and disillusionment of the law-abiding segment of the people.

Intellectual qualities are derided and denounced as ineffective in the matters of crime and the police employ, and are encouraged to employ, outrageously sadistic measures as the only means of investigation of crimes. All over the country often, the torture of the police especially on the innocent persons taken into custody, has caused locality-wise public resentment, which only again invoked the use of force by the administration. Scientific and technological developments have brought the knowledge of organisation of power within the reach of the common men which cannot be overlooked by the state in a situation of confrontation or in the matter of the use of force.

Violence although may be used for some immediate objectives, in the ultimate analysis, betrays the weaknesses of the user in terms of cowardies, rage and barbarity which tend to brutalise a nation. A democratic government cannot continue even in its name if the causes that give rise to situations of violence and torture are not properly understood and eliminated. Passion is the pest on reason and repression is the worst enemy of refinement. The administration cannot escape the responsibility of containing violence by raising the mental, moral and material standard of society. It should at every level end its discrimination and be fully guided by the issue of fairness and justice to resolved the innumerable contradictions of society which are at the roots of violence.

The great expectations of democratic decentralisation generated in the fifties as the party in power sought to modify or improve upon the local democracy introduced by Lord Ripon in 1882, are however gradually fading out in the light of the attitude of both politicians and administrators. The institutions of local, self-government introduced in the states in spite of their minor structural and functional varia-

tions, were a great step towards building up democratic consciousness at the grassroots. Indian village which is the seat of irrational orthodoxy, bigoted superstition, built-in violence and social strife, enforced illiteracy and adopted ignorance and inequality, can be modernised by vigorous functioning of a comprehensive local democratic system.

The social conviction necessary for the gradual but irreversible change in the village can be formed only through continuing democratic education, the basic school for which is institution of local self-government. It enables free social interaction by eradication of the age-long prejudices and the other prevailing evils for the re-constitution of a national society. There cannot be a national integration without social integration. However the strange fusion between the self-importance the short-sighted politician and the self-righteousness of the bureaucrats added with the indifference and passivity of the masses, tenders local democracy not inert, inoperative but corrupt and dysfunctional.

The discovery of great minds and great talents in the village is a sure means to improve the qualitative content of Indian democracy and to ensure the orderly operation of democratic institutions at the state and national level. Unless an apt answer to the problem of revitalisation or restoration of local democracy in its full dimension is found, the administrative behaviour will remain obnoxiously oligarchic. The fear of power can be overcome only by its distribution down to the lowest tiers and the use of power with responsibility alone will make the people self-confident and self-respecting. The superior claims of centralisation are absolutely absurd where the criterion of self-development in an autonomous environment is essentially valid. Local matters should be left to local people themselves so that they will eventually prove themselves to be quite confident and competent to solve more complex problems for promoting national interest.

Side by side with democratic decentralisation, the process of participation at all levels of administration has to be activated. The Indian Constitution is severely belaboured to concentrate all powers at the centre in order to make the states virtually dependencies on it. This trend, in practice,

has foreclosed the possibilities for the emergence of state level leadership capable of establishing democratic equations in the national politics and having the stature to offer national alternatives.

It is undoubtedly a discouraging and disappointing picture that the political leadership emerged at the state level in protest against the undemocratic manoeuvres in the national sphere, itself has turned into distressingly dictatorial suppressing every dissent to the dismay not only of the votaries of freedom but also of its own supporters. Ambitious bureaucrats pliable enough to be servile to seek self contributed enormously to the distortion of the democratic system. As a result, there is in reality increasing concentration of power despite the written orders aiming at decentralisation and delegation, and there is little room for initiative, objective comments and discussion, and independent thinking and decision-making. Incriminating each other, the bureaucrat and the politician have alike put claims on the administrative principles and norms to serve their personal ends. An intellectually distinct, bold, upright and honest leadership magnanimously disposed to defend and encourage the rightful actions of all levels and resolutely attached to discipline to correct the unintentional errors and abuses is an imperative need of Indian administration which has not yet been fulfilled.

The doctrine of obedience which asphyxiates the subordinate tiers has to be substituted with the principle of productive participation and occasions for adulation and sycophancy should be made into opportunities for upright performance with the use of individual attributes.

The territorial administration of the country with the district as the principal unit and focal point is as old as the days of the Mauryas in its structure, and the successive rulers tried to preserve it as it was the best suited for exercising control over a subject population. The British rationalised the district administration to some extent to make it an effective agency for the enforcement of law and order and made elaborate rules for regulating its actions.

Nowhere in the civilised world now exists an administration

similar to that of the district in India. With its overcentralisation and bureaucratic leadership, the district set-up has been a mountainous obstruction before any reform aimed at its democratisation.

After the political emancipation of the country, piecemeal introduction of changes in it has virtually left the district administration in a continuous state of flux. The politician in authority finds in the bureaucratic district head overburdened with functions, overarmed with powers and removable at will is a most convenient medium for perpetuating his predominance and a convincing excuse to forestall any attempt to democratise the district administration with a view to maintain his self importance. The abolition of the Zilla Parishad in Haryana, the indefinite postponement of the implementation of the Kerala District Councils Act, and the relegation of the local self-government bodies in many other states to stuporous paralysis are a part of this grand design.

The district administration must be salvaged from the present state of flux, and democratised and modernised. It must be restructured into an institutional pattern in which authority will be matched with responsibility. It must be made into a centre of development under participative management freely welcoming talent and expertise. The electoral democracy in the states and at the centre should seek its legitimacy and institutional sanctity and efficacy through the actual democracy actively working in the district.

The purposes of the state entering the area of economic activity is not to squander or profiteer like scheming private individuals but to produce goods and services efficiently and distribute them equitably to the largest number of people at a price not alone reasonable but within the limits of their purchasing power.

The colossal losses and the crass management blunders which the public undertakings are forced to suffer, have hardly any parallel in any other country aiming at the creation of a welfare state. In a developing country as India with its ill-provided millions, there is no alternative to the state coming into the economic sphere in a big way. The extension of economic justice to the masses by regulating the concentrations of private wealth, is the prime responsibility of the

state.

The slackness of the public undertaking is a problem of lack of experience, managerial knowledge and skills and of forcing them to bureaucratic style and temperament. Appointing officers of a uniformed service as the police to manage government business organisations is to dilute their *esprit de corpe* and to misapply their professional specialisation, more, to consecrate an acknowledged atheist as an arch-priest of an exploiting and fanatic creed.

The idea of privatisation is a cleverly planned ruse to beguile the state from its objective of socialisation and to distribute poverty more extensively for the lumpenisation of the masses. The evolution of an effective strategy for the public undertakings to pass through their management-made-ordeal is the test of the professional competence of the administration in the immediate future.

Apart from these fundamental problems, there are major problems of no less importance like the training of civil servants, public health and public hygiene, energy, national defence, open governmental system and environmental conservation.

The frontiers of knowledge are rapidly advancing and the self-assumptions and ego of the civil servants are not the means to catch up with them. With the phenomenal expansion of science and technology, society and economy are becoming more and more complex and unmanageable with the conservative standards and methods on which the civil servants still faithfully hold on. The administration should create the conditions and expand the facilities for the development of a managerial philosophy conducive to the country.

Instead of disparaging the existing training system, it must be fully over-hauled according to the needs of the changing times to seek identity between what the trainee should know and what the trainer knows.

Public hygiene and public health in the country are still in a miserable and deplorable state. The squalor of the village and of the slums tends to intimidate and imperil public health all over the country. The hospitals, in spite of their best imported equipments, continue to be islands of infection and blackholes of inhumanity primarily because of the inept and

perfunctory maintenance management and utter absence of the spirit of service and humanity.

Access to information on the working of the government is the basic right of the citizen. It keeps him educated of the governmental activities and creates in him a sense of belonging and interest in the affairs of the state. The allegiance of the citizen can be secured for the stability of the government only if it is open to his investigation. The administration should remove the veil of unwanted secrecy and admit to its portals intellectuals and students. An open government and open society are the strongest foundation of an enduring democratic state.