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Table of Contents

Indian Bureaucracy.....	2
Dynamics of Civil Services.....	4
Probity in Governance.....	6
Public Administration for Social Change	9
IFS: The Continuing Salience	11
Reforms in the Civil Services.....	13



Indian Bureaucracy

History of Civil Services in India

- Public administration in India can be traced back to the manuscripts of Arthashastra written by Kautilya.
- In the next major phase, Bharat witnessed the rule of the Guptas also termed by many historians as the “Golden Age.”
- The original conception of ‘civil service’ can be traced back to the Royal Charters which gave the East India Company the powers to raise a cadre of troops – for both civilian and military purposes.
- The ‘covenanted’ and the ‘uncovenanted’ or simply, the subordinate service marked an important distinction while the former category of officers was recruited from England, the subordinated service largely comprised Indian officers in subordinate positions.
- This uncovenanted service was later called the Indian Civil Service (ICS) established to handle the affairs on behalf of the Queen.
- The Civil services soon became the proverbial ‘steel frame’ to maintain control over the vast British Empire.
- During the Constitutional Assembly Debates (CAD), there were detailed discussions and arguments about the continuity, the role and loyalty of Indian civil servants, and whether it was wise to continue with the same system in post-Independence.

Early Indians in the Civil Service

- The first Indian to clear the ICS exam was Satyendra Nath Tagore in the year 1864. It is important to remember that until 1922 post the Montagu Chelmsford Reforms, the exam was conducted only in London.
- Other notable names are Bihari Lal Gupta and Romesh Chandra Dutt. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose did not join the Indian civil service even after clearing the exam. Sir Benegal Narasinga Rau was another personality among the ICS who was appointed as the Constitutional Advisor in 1946.
- India saw some of the foremost civil servants rise to the occasion and create unshakable institutional values, methods, and processes to ensure that India remained a democracy in both form and spirit.



- Impartiality, incorruptibility, spirit of service are some of the virtues that are seen in civil servants. The *esprit de corps* and the *camaraderie* amongst the civil servants' fraternity have been the single biggest strength of our Civil Service.

Constitution and the Civil Service

- Articles 310, 311, and 312 of the Indian Constitution pertain to Services under the Union and State.
- Article 310 enshrines that civil servants of the Union and All-India Services are appointed by the President of India and civil servants at the State level are appointed by the Governor of the State. They continue to hold office as per the pleasure of the President and Governor, respectively. Therefore, they have the security of tenure.
- Article 311 mentions the procedures and conditions for removal, dismissal from service, and the reduction in rank, thus ensuring due process of law. This ensures that civil servants are protected from political interference and undue harassment.
- Article 312 lays down the All-India Services of India. The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and the State Public Service Commissions are constitutional bodies.
- Every year, April 21 is celebrated as 'Civil Services Day' to call on civil servants to renew their dedication and commitment to public service and excellence in work.

Challenges and Reforms in the Civil Service

- Some of the fundamental tenets of a good bureaucracy are political neutrality, objectivity in decision-making, empathy, equity, etc.
- Constitutionalism matters because every civil servant must be guided by the letter and spirit of our Constitution. Ethics in public administration are important because civil servants are often holding offices that give them a lot of power and authority.
- The Second Administrative Reforms Commission (headed by Veerappa Moily) discussed the shortcomings and suggests improvements regarding recruitment, performance, and result-oriented bureaucracy.
- In the last decade, several reforms have been undertaken. Be it the introduction of lateral entry to have expert consultations at the Joint Secretary level, the regular training programmes of training at various levels for career civil servants and a record of performance evaluation.



- Legislations such as the Right to Information Act, 2005 lays down rules and procedures for a citizen's right to information, thus creating more transparency and accountability in governance.
- Many fresh graduates from IITs, IIMs, NLU's and other professionals like doctors, chartered accountants, etc. appear for the UPSC Civil Services every year. This has brought fresh energy and ideas into bureaucracy.

Dynamics of Civil Services

- The modern democracy has evolved based on elections and the people's 'representatives' fulfill the task of ruling and governing the state. Hence, there is a need to objectively administer there in the day-to-day matters without favour or disfavor.
- Max Weber distinguished between three types of authority (legitimate power):
 - Traditional authority (based on succession, rituals, subjective desires, etc)
 - Charismatic authority (based on gifted quality, e.g. Swami Vivekananda, Lord Rama, etc.)
 - Rational-legal authority i.e. bureaucracy.
- He defined bureaucracy as the 'formal organisation', with the following characteristics:
 - Formal selection and promotion
 - Written rules, regulations, processes, and procedures
 - Hierarchical structure
 - Specialisation and division of labour and responsibility
 - Professionalism
 - Career-orientation
- Therefore, Max Weber preferred the rational-legal authority of bureaucracy as an ideal type to the other two types of authority in a democratic society.

How Bureaucracy functions in India

- At different levels, of Group A, B, and C, the candidates are selected based on competitive examinations – by UPSC, State PSCs, or State Staff Selection Boards.
- After imparting training they start working. In civil services, one has to serve for at least fourteen years to become Director and to serve for at least eighteen years to become a Joint Secretary (Govt. of India) while it takes at least thirty-two years to become Secretary (Govt. of India).



- Regarding the compliance of rules and regulations, sometimes processes and procedures for ensuring uniformity and impartiality are not adhered to while the set of rules and regulations are made by the competent authority.
- As far as hierarchical structure is concerned, it is useful for inspection and monitoring of and guidance to subordinates, but at times it is being eroded by favouring the lower officers on the ground of caste.
- Regarding the division of labour, the principle of sharing both power and responsibility in a balanced way should prevail for obtaining the optimal outcome, otherwise, power without responsibility leads to autocracy and corruption.
- All policymakers and administrators are expected to review the arrangement of decision-making and try their level best to devolve and decentralize the power down the line.
- Professionalism is the keyword in civil services. It comprises four components in an integrated way: uniformity, neutrality, efficiency, and anonymity. A civil servant is expected to dispose of public works well in time, without flouting basic rules.
- The career orientation with stability and continuity of civil services brings societal equilibrium and farsightedness. In particular, the All India Services (IAS, IPS, & IFS) provide an opportunity to have a holistic national vision of development of all and unity in diversity.
- However, this stability and continuity does not mean avoiding the change as change is the law of nature, hence civil servants have to adapt to change for the well-being of the people and prosperity of the nation.

Pathologies of the System

- Various pathological syndromes are seen in the everyday behavior of officers and the system.
- Bureaucracy is often blamed for 'red tapism' (i.e. delay) and indecisiveness in many forms.
- Also, there is the pathological syndrome of 'too busy, hence cannot attend phone calls or give personal hearing to the aggrieved persons'. This leads to further delay, deterioration of a situation, corrupt practices by the subordinates or middlemen, inefficiency due to not attending the feedback, and a bad image of the office/officer concerned.
- Further, there is the prevalence of the 'transfer industry' in most of the states, at different levels. The principle of three years' tenure is hardly followed, and many officers are transferred within a year or even earlier without sufficient/ genuine reasons. Civil Services Boards in states exist only formally.
- There are instances wherein some officers continue on the same post for nine or ten years because of political connection, backing, and favour to officers of a particular caste or religious community.



- This deprives other competent officers to have an experience on that post.
- Often favoured transfers are linked with parochial consideration and money changes hands. Thus the vicious circle of corruption goes on and on.
- Finally, there has been the triad of 'liberalisation, privatization and globalisation' (LPG). Various entities' shares are sold and even the entire enterprise is sold under the euphemism of 'disinvestment'.

Conclusion

- We may conclude that bureaucracy is compatible with democracy wherein the people's representatives are on the driver's seat, hence they need to guide the civil servants.
- If we may make a SWOT analysis of civil services, we find that its strengths are more than its weaknesses.
- It has an opportunity to serve the nation through new ways, changes, reducing human interface, but threats are to be removed at the earliest for strengthening the administrators further.

Probity in Governance

- Ethics is a set of standards that helps guide behavior, choices and actions of individuals. It is multidimensional as it is governed by the value system of the society.
- Ethics and probity form the cornerstone of the public administration system.
- Values facilitating the subordination of the self to a larger good and spirit of empathy for others cannot be easily imbibed in a short time. There is need for attitudinal changes that requires nurturing over a lifetime.
- Responsibility and accountability are integral to ethics. The character of laws and rules through which accountability is enforced is based on the moral ideas of society.
- Code of Conduct/ Ethics for its Ministers, legislators and civil servants is prescribed in many countries.

Concept

- The word 'ethics' is from the original Greek term 'ethikos', meaning 'arising from habit'. Undoubtedly, culture, values, character, the sense of right and wrong are quintessential determinants of ethics.



- At the same time, the role of institutions and institutional frameworks to ensure ethical governance cannot be understated.
- The public confidence and respect which the functionaries enjoy is largely the result of collective efforts. Adherence to key principles of Integrity, honesty and objectivity promotes trust and confidence among the stakeholders and enhances credibility.
- The conduct of Government functionaries should be beyond reproach in all circumstances.

Ethics in Governance

- Ethics is concerned with human character and conduct. It condemns all kinds of falsehoods.
- The Second Administrative Reforms Commission in its Second Report on Ethics suggested the principles for ethics in the governance and stated that any framework of ethical behavior must include the following elements:
 - Codifying ethical norms and practices
 - Disclosing personal interest to avoid conflict between public interest and personal gain.
 - Creating a mechanism for enforcing the relevant codes.
 - Providing norms for qualifying and disqualifying a public functionary from office
- Values serve as guiding stars showing the path to all the members of the society and everyone is expected to respect and follow them.
- Integrity has to be seen as a holistic concept covering various aspects of conduct and not limited to financial honesty.
- Public office should be treated as a trust which imposes a lot of responsibility on the holders of the office and makes them accountable to society.
- Integrity requires the public functionaries to exercise due diligence while discharging their duties responsibly, make decisions with the public interest in mind.
- Conflict of interest is to be avoided in all circumstances and at all times. Accordingly, under no circumstances, the official position should be used for private purposes.
- Decisions should never be driven by gains for a select few or specific segments of society.
- The Government of India has prescribed a Code of Conduct, applicable to Ministers both in the Union Government and State Government. It envisages inter-alia, disclosure of assets and liabilities by the Minister, severing all connections with business.



- The Code of Conduct for the Civil Servants has evolved over time. In pursuance of the recommendations of the Santhanam Committee, the Conduct rules were revised and enlarged resulting in CCS Conduct Rules 1964 being followed today.
- The Conduct Rules have been amended since the 1964 version. Some notable inclusions are the requirement of observing courtesy, prohibiting demanding and accepting dowry, prohibiting sexual harassment of women employees and recently, the prohibition to employ children below 14 years of age as domestic help.
- The Conduct rules prescribe some general behavioural norms like ‘maintaining the integrity and absolute devotion of duty’ and not indulging in ‘conduct unbecoming of a government servant’.
- It needs to be mentioned that there is no Code of Ethics prescribed for civil servants in India.
- Despite the comprehensive Code of Conduct, there are cases of deviations from the expected behavioural norms.
- There are arguments that the entire process of awarding the penalties for the same is rather tedious and time-consuming. Such procedural issues can be addressed by laying down the timelines for each stage of the process and more importantly by monitoring that the timelines so prescribed have been adhered to.

International Exposure

- The General Assembly adopted the United Nations Convention against Corruption in 2003. Article 8 of the Resolution refers to “Code of Conduct for public officials”.
- The Committee on Standards in Public Life in the United Kingdom,, popularly Known as the Nolan Committee outlined the seven principles of public life: Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty, and Leadership.

Framework

- Probity in governance is absolutely essential for an efficient and effective system of governance.
- Ethics and probity cannot be seen in isolation. Both are intertwined and have to be seen as complementary to each other.
- Good Governance rests on trust and confidence. Probity in governance is expected to ensure accountability, transparency, and integrity in public life.
- In India, there is an extensive legislative and institutional framework in this regard.
 - Institutional framework includes CVC, CBI, CAG and Lokpal & Lokayukta
 - Laws include Prevention of Corruption Act, Right to Information Act, IPC & CrPC



Conclusion

- The Government functionaries are part of the society and to that extent are influenced by societal norms.
- At the same time, being part of the governance structure, they have to be more responsible and seen to be above board all the time.
- There is a strong legal and institutional framework for ensuring probity.

Public Administration for Social Change

- E-governance became an inevitable evolution in successful governance in the modern era. Governments are required to embrace Information and Communication Technology to meet the demands of their citizens.
- India being the largest democracy in the world, started adopting e-governance in the 1970s and adopted the change quickly, and progressed towards good governance policy at a rapid speed.
- The e-Governance aims to make the interaction between government and citizens (G2C), government and business enterprises (G2B), and inter-agency relationships (G2G) convenient, transparent, friendly, effective, and cost-effective.
- Though the Government of India established various endeavors to successfully implement the e-Governance initiative, the complexities exist due to the inter-operability among central, state, district, and local governments.
- According to the UN E-government Survey 2020 of the UN Department of Social and Economic Affairs (UNDESA), India was placed 100th in the E-Governance Development Index.
- To overcome the challenges such as inter-operability, infrastructural challenges, digital divide and Covid-19 pandemic, etc., India is taking new initiatives to develop the overall effectiveness of service delivery mechanism.
- The Government of India introduced the National e-Governance Services Delivery Assessment (NeSDA) framework in August 2019 to assess the effectiveness of the e-Governance initiatives of the different government departments from the central to the local level.
- The major core infrastructure components of e-governance initiatives of the Government of India are State Data Centers (SDCs), State Wide Area Networks (SWAN), Common Services Centers etc
- The biometric identification scheme, 'Aadhaar' brought the digital revolution to e-governance.



- The 12-digit unique identity number issued to Indians by the Government supported the financial inclusion schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Food and Public Distribution System, and many other poverty alleviation and welfare delivery schemes.

National e-Governance Plan (NeGP)

- NeGP comprises 31 Mission Mode Projects (MMPs). MMPs focus on one aspect of governance with clearly defined objectives, scopes, implementation timelines, and milestones with measurable outcomes and service levels.

Digital India Initiative

- The Digital India Initiative was launched in the year 2015 to bridge the gap between urban and rural areas by promoting investment in digital infrastructure, fostering digital literacy, and expanding online service provision.
- The vision of the Digital Indian programme is to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy.
- Digital India is designed as an umbrella programme that covers multiple Government Ministries and Departments.
- The overall coordination of the Digital India Programme is done by the Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY).

National e-Governance Services Delivery Assessment (NeSDA)

- NeSDA was launched to promote the participation of various departments and ministries at State and Central level to adopt the e-Government framework in day-to-day functioning, to encourage e-participation of citizens and businesses in policymaking.
- The parameters of assessing under NeSDA are accessibility, ease of use, end service delivery, integrated service delivery, content availability, information security & privacy, and status and request tracking.

e-Governance & Covid-19 Pandemic

- During the current pandemic, e-governance stepped into the central role as a necessary element of communication, leadership, and coordination between policymakers, administration, and society.



- Digital technologies established through e-governance initiatives became an important source for sharing knowledge, encouraging collaborative research, and providing transparent guidance to the citizens.
- The online database of Covid-19 cases, lockdown guidelines, travel restrictions, locating the vacant beds in the hospitals, oxygen cylinders, financial assistance, and relief distribution, etc., were carried out only through e-governance infrastructure.
- Aarogya Setu App and Co-WIN App are the main e-governance tools that supported the citizens and government to trace the Covid patients and manage the vaccination.

Challenges and Way Forward

- The important challenge ahead of the sudden surge of the ambit of e-governance in the post-Covid scenario is assuring a secure, effective, reliable, transparent system that is reconciled with the basic rights and values guaranteed in the Constitution of India.
- Another challenge in e-governance is to adopt new methods to decrease the digital divide and to promote inclusive e-governance for achieving the promise, 'to leave nobody behind'.

IFS: The Continuing Salience

- The Indian Foreign Service was created for India's diplomatic, consular and commercial representation overseas.
- The IFS, being one of the most competitive civil services in the world, and also one of the most exclusive has carved a niche for itself in diplomatic spheres globally.
- It has managed India's external relations with other nations through a host of methods: the service is responsible for representing India in international platforms and negotiating on its behalf, maintaining friendly relations and protecting India's national interests, and gathering important information abroad and reporting back to the nation on the same.
- Foreign Service officers aim to promote peace and prosperity while advancing their nation's interests in other countries.
- They perform a vast array of duties ranging from defending their home nation's foreign policy in high-stakes political conversations to helping their citizens travelling overseas or vice-versa.



- In an increasingly globalized world, the importance of an effective foreign service cannot be underestimated.
- This is especially relevant for an emerging power like India, which has harbored intentions of becoming a leading power in global politics and has been actively pursuing this goal.
- Resultantly, India's diplomatic corps, under the Indian Foreign Services, have acted as an effective catalyst in India's transformation into a global power.
- Established on October 9, 1946, the Indian Foreign Service has been in existence for 74 years and has witnessed India gradually transform into a modern nation-state with global relevance.
- An Indian Foreign Service Officer represents India in Embassies, High Commissions, Consulates and permanent missions to multilateral organisations like the UN, protects India's national interests in the country of their posting, promote friendly relations with the receiving states as well as their people.
- Today, the global order is far different than what it was when the Cold War was at its peak, memories of World War II were still raw, and India has decided not to align itself with either of the two superpowers.
- India of today has aspirations of becoming a key global player.
- In this emerging new world, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) can no longer maintain its Cold War-era institutional architecture. And several changes have indeed been ushered in recent times.
- However, the IFS is greatly by its disproportionately small cadre, its inability to shift to a more holistic recruitment process, and its unwillingness to allow experts from other public and private organisations, laterally or otherwise.
- If the IFS is to excel as an institution on its own, it must have a different application process only for those interested in joining the service, rather than being grouped with other civil services.
- The IFS needs to broaden the criteria on which its recruitment process is based. Attempts to reform the IFS must focus on streamlining the recruitment process in a manner that can effectively handle the large number of applicants that apply each year without compromising on the quality of the application process.
- The IFS must also keep up with the changes in the diplomatic world, as different forms of diplomacy, like public and digital diplomacy, gain more relevance.
- And lastly, reforming the IFS would require starting at the very grassroots level to reform the institutions that produce applicants for this service.

Conclusion



- Irrespective of the criticisms, India has been boxing above its weight in the international arena for decades now.
- To note some recent achievements of the IFS, India managed to get elected to the United Nations Security Council for 2021-22 with one of the largest positive vote counts ever.
- The IFS Officers and their teams have been working relentlessly with other government agencies and the private sector to provide medicines and Covid-19 protective equipment to more than 150 countries by overcoming daunting logistical challenges.
- No nation can maintain isolated and hence formulation of foreign policy is an indispensable feature of the modern state.
- Therefore, the Indian Foreign Services will continue to play a critical role in ensuring a secure and prosperous existence for India within the international sphere.

Reforms in the Civil Services

- Civil Services refer to the career civil servants who are the permanent executive branch of the Republic of India.
- The civil service has long been regarded as the ‘steel frame’ of administration in India from colonial days. The colonial legacy of civil service is continuing in this fast-changing era of globalization.
- It is in this context that civil service reform forms a quintessential part of good governance.
- The modern Indian Administrative Service was created under Article 321 (2) in part XIV of the Constitution of India, and the All India Services Act, 1951.

Classification of Services

- Part XIV of the Indian Constitution provides for different types or classes of services for India.
- As per constitution, the services are divided into the following categories –
 - All India Services (AIS), State Services, and Local and Municipal Services.
 - There are four groups of central services – Group A, B, C & D.

Civil Services Reforms

- Civil Service Reform is a deliberate change effort by the government to improve its capacity to effectively and efficiently execute policies.



- In recent times, there has been accelerated change globally brought about by technological advances, greater decentralization and social activism.
- The ramification of these changes are being felt by the government in the form of increasing expectations for better governance through effective service delivery, transparency, accountability, and rule of law.
- The purpose of 'reform' is to reorient the Civil Services into a dynamic, efficient, and accountable apparatus for public service delivery built on the ethos and values of integrity, impartiality and neutrality.
- The reform is to raise the quality of public services delivered to the citizens and enhance the capacity to carry out core government functions, thereby, leading to sustainable development.
- Reforms are needed to overcome ailments afflicting Indian civil services like poor capacity building, inefficient incentive systems, outmoded rules and procedures lack of transparency, arbitrariness etc.

Recent Reforms : Mission Karmayogi

- The Government has announced a new comprehensive Civil Services reforms programme aimed at better services delivery to the public.
- The government's policy think tank NITI Aayog has a chapter dedicated to the issue in a landmark 2018 report.
- The Strategy for New India @ 75 report stresses the need "to put in place a reformed system of recruitment, training and performance evaluation of the civil service."
- The government also announced on September 2, 2020 that under its Mission Karmayogi programme, civil servants would be trained to be "more creative, constructive, imaginative, innovative & proactive.
- Mission Karmayogi aims to transform the capacity building apparatus at the individual, institutional, and process levels at Government of India.
- It promises a shift from rules to roles, silos to coordination, interdisciplinary movements, and a continuous capacity building exercise.
- The fundamental focus of the reform is the creation of a 'citizen-centric civil service' capable of creating and delivering services conducive to economic growth and public welfare.
- The National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building has been so designed that it remains entrenched in Indian culture and sensibilities while drawing learning resources from the best institutions and practices across the world.



- The Public Human Resources Council under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister would oversee the entire capacity building exercise.
- An expert body called Capacity Building Commission will be set up to harmonise training standards, create shared faculty and resources and have a supervisory role over all Central Training Institutions.
- An appropriate monitoring and evaluation framework will also be put in place for performance evaluation of all users of the iGOT-Karmayogi platform.
- The iGOT model was tried successfully during Covid situation for training health professionals.
- iGOT-Karmayogi platform is expected to evolve into a vibrant and world-class marketplace for content where carefully curated and vetted digital e-learning material will be made available.
- Thus, Mission Karmayogi aims to prepare the Indian Civil Servant for the future by making him more creative, constructive, and citizen-friendly.

Conclusion

- Capacity augmentation of Civil Servants plays a vital role in rendering a wide variety of services, implementing welfare programs, and performing core governance functions.
- The future of the country cannot be progressive without a reformed bureaucracy.
- Rationalization and harmonization of service may be the need of the hour. The existing 60 plus separate civil services at the central and state level needs to be reduced through rationalization and harmonization of services.
- The over-emphasis on one-time examination, rank allocation, and consequent lifelong privileges should be done away with as elitism should not be the hallmark of the civil servants who are foremost public servants and should be, as far as plausible, connected with the people they represent.
- Civil Service Reforms should realign the outdated structure and culture of the services and forgo its colonial hangover aiming to raise the quality and sensitivity of services to the citizens that are essential for sustainable economic and social development.