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Bureaucracy as an Agent of Social Change and Development

by

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Interest in the future state is no longer confined to Astrologers, but every citizen must be concerned about the future state of his/her society. Every society and particularly its leaders, men of ideas and action devote considerable thinking to preferred future because there is hardly any society whose state of affairs are completely satisfactory. There is inevitably a concern for the future state. However, it is more important to have a studied concern or rather analytical concern which raises the problem of what is the preferred future and even more importantly how to bring it about? These two questions enable meaningful linking of the present with the future. As a matter of fact, through appropriate action the preferred future state can be accomplished. Such an exercise would require analytical rigour and theoretical sophistication which alone can help realisation of the preferred future. Even if one were to know impediments in the realisation of such preferred future, one would have contributed at least to some degree towards its realisation.

Change and Development

Change is the inexorable law of every society and a modern society is characterised by change which is deliberately devised and planned, which also means that there is planning in favour of change which is preferred. In fact, such a planning means a degree of control over what is sought to be accomplished. Social change is generally defined as a change in the core institutions, then alone it would qualify for

the title of social change. Social change is not to be equated with cultural change, but it must encompass every aspect of life and reality whereby the changing state is more advisable, profitable and enjoyable for all the participants concerned. Change means, change from the present to the future which is obviously a preferred future. Therefore, in the concept of change is implicit transition from existing state of affairs to a preferred state of future. In the Indian context, social change is to be equated with development and, of course, there are various models of development in terms of which appropriate mechanisms are devised to ensure the development process. In India, as we know, interest in development started with the formulation of various Five Year Plans. If we merely notice the size of the public sector outlay in the First Five Year Plan which was only 2068.78 crores to Rs.37,250.00 crores in the Fifth Five Year Plan, we can easily imagine the considerable expansion in our concept of development. While the financial outlay is mentioned, it is not to be imagined that the concept of development is purely a financial concept, but that it is a total concept. While stress is laid on economic planning, it is very clearly realised that "the economic condition of a country, at any given time, is a product of the broader social environment and economic planning has to be viewed as an integral part of a wider process aiming not merely at the development of resources in a narrow technical sense, but at the development of human faculties and the building of institutional framework adequate to the needs and aspirations of the people."¹ The goals of development are to be decided on the basis of a large measure of agreement in the community in respect of policy formulation. Similarly, effective

power will also rest in the active co-operation of the citizens and state power will be utilised for the furtherance of these ends. It also means that there will be an efficient administrative set-up with personnel of requisite capacity and quality. After the advent of freedom, the Indian state decided to step in a big way in the entire development process - (a) by formulating plans, (b) by initiating schemes of development, (c) by providing the requisite administrative organisation, and (d) by eliciting people's co-operation in respect of the developmental task. The community development programme, extension programme and several other programmes bear testimony to this. The state in India is naturally concerned with the management of change and development. And obviously, it is not interested in the steady state systems, but in initiating and ensuring appropriate change and development. Naturally, there is a tremendous concern for achievement of targets.

"The penetration of the state into economic and social development activities and acquired new importance in the task of nation building. The odium for bringing about desired economic, social and political change in India has in greater part fallen on the bureaucracy which had been built up over the years by the British to suit their objectives".² There is, no doubt, that the laissez-faire approach has been given up in favour of deliberate planning for change and development. The major goal envisaged is that of social and economic planning which would ensure not only prosperity, but a more just social order where every one will have ample chance for self-improvement and development. Thus, the concept of social change and development is essentially a complex one which really necessitates structural changes so as to ensure

economic prosperity, self-reliance, dignity of every individual, social justice, equality etc.

Bureaucracy

It was already mentioned as to how the state in India has entered in a big way on this developmental exercise and naturally, therefore, as one can imagine, there has been a considerable, if not complete, reliance on the administrative machinery for launching, initiating and implementing the developmental process. It should also be mentioned that in many ways the administrative machinery is also expected to educate public opinion so as to make the people accept (a) the goals of development, (b) the programmes of development, and also (c) the mechanics and dynamics of development. It would not be wrong to say that the administrative machinery is also expected to sell the programmes of development to the people. Obviously, this is a considerable departure from the traditional role and function of the administrative machinery, which at least in the pre-Independence period was entrusted with the task of maintaining law and order. As the five year plans acquired momentum, there has been addition to the task of the administrative machinery which includes programmes such as agricultural development, industrial development, education, family planning etc. In short, a great deal is expected of the administrative machinery with reference to ensuring changes in the people in respect of their attitudes, practices, values, ideologies etc. The administrative machinery in India can be properly described as a bureaucracy which has been called upon to perform significant functions so as to ensure the attainment of goals of development. The word bureaucracy conjures the

Weberian model. According to Weber, bureaucracy characterises the acceptance of legal, rational authority which further means, development of complex society along with industrialisation and economic development.

(1) They are personally free and subject to authority only with respect to their impersonal official obligations.

(2) They are organized in a clearly defined hierarchy of offices.

(3) Each office has a clearly defined sphere of competence in the legal sense.

(4) The office is filled by a free contractual relationship. Thus, in principle, there is free selection.

(5) Candidates are selected on the basis of technical qualifications. In the most rational case, this is tested by examination or guaranteed by diplomas certifying technical training or both. They are appointed, not elected.

(6) They are remunerated by fixed salaries in money, for the most part with a right to pensions. Only under certain circumstances does the employing authority, especially in private organizations, have a right to terminate the appointment, but the official is always free to resign. The salary scale is primarily graded according to rank in the hierarchy; but in addition to this criterion, the responsibility of the position and the requirements of the incumbent's social status may be taken into account.

(7) The office is treated as the sole, or at least the primary, occupation of the incumbent.

(8) It constitutes a career. There is a system of "promotion" according to seniority or to achievement. Promotion is dependent on the judgement of superiors.

(9) The official work is entirely separated from ownership of the means of administration and without

appropriation of his position.

(10) He is subject to strict and systematic discipline and control in the conduct of the office." 3

Weber was mindful of the fact that an advanced economic system would require a highly developed and efficient system of bureaucracy whether that system was capitalist or socialist. Weber was also mindful of the possibility that bureaucrats would be called upon to perform the task of providing leadership for social transformation as is evinced by the demands made on the democracy in the third world. In fact, an important problem arises out of this observation of Weber which has been criticised by several authors, namely, whether there is a fit between these demands made on bureaucracy and the structural features of Weberian model of bureaucracy.

Several critics of Weber, like, Merton, Blau, Selznick, Frederick and others have pointed out as to how Weberian emphasis on the formal structure breaks down when the clients whom they are supposed to serve demand a primary group relationship. Then again, the requirement of maintaining of proper distance between the bureaucracy and the people also breaks down when bureaucracy is utilised for the developmental task. Moreover, bureaucracy is not a static phenomenon, but is amenable to change in the light of the new challenges and requirements. The fetish which is made about rules and regulations generally works against docile and law abiding and the weaker sections of society, because the affluent sections have a way of evading such rules and regulations.

It has been very rightly emphasized that there are structural and behavioural aspects of bureaucracy, particularly when bureaucracy is utilised for ensuring development.

"The essence of development administration today lies in its capacity to bring about congruence between the programmes designed to change the structure and behaviour of the various institutions, to develop acceptance for the change, and finally conduct the various activities in a manner which can sustain and support the change objectives."⁴ This also means that along with initiating changes in others, bureaucracy will have to undergo appropriate change in its own personality, culture, behaviour, organisation etc. which will be discussed in the end.

When bureaucracy is employed for bringing about development and change, the social structural features naturally assume great significance. The nature of our social structure with special reference to stratification in respect of social, economic and political power acquires a great deal of importance because those who are powerful are likely to have the maximum access to the services provided by the bureaucracy. Secondly, bureaucracy when it is used for agricultural development in our villages which means really transferring of resources from the haves to the have nots, acquires special complexity. The financial rules and regulations tend to hamper the process of agricultural development. There is also the problem of the matching of administrative capability with the development policy which is very complex in nature. There is continually an addition to the task to be performed by bureaucracy particularly in the field situation. It is customary to distinguish between bureaucracy and bureaucrats. It would also be useful to remember that even if bureaucrats were systematically to change their personality, the public at large must also accept their image in reality. There is no denying the fact that bureaucracy when it is utilised for developmental task

has to undergo changes in its structure as well as in its behaviour.

Several studies have been conducted of the working of bureaucracy in the setting of developmental tasks, particularly with reference to agriculture, irrigation, electricity etc. which bring about very important facts which have implications for theory. While it is customary to point out that smaller farmers do not derive the expected benefit from the bureaucrats in respect of various facilities being made available to them, there is no gainsaying the fact that even in respect of the small farmers, if they are able to persist they can get better services from the bureaucrats. Several authors have pointed out that the experience of small cultivators of officials is indifferent. The middle farmers benefit to the extent of 45%, while the big farmers benefit to the tune of 80%. However, as mentioned earlier even the smaller farmers can derive some benefit through appropriate mobilisation. It has been pointed out by several field studies that bureaucrats working in the field situation tend to be more sensitive to the needs and aspirations of the common masses. The usual complaint that bureaucrats or rather their services are monopolised by the powerful sections of the people is not entirely correct.

Moreover, while Weberian model has been duly criticised, there is also ample evidence to suggest that basically there is no cleavage involved when bureaucracy is utilised for developmental task. In fact, Pai Panandikar has suggested several propositions which take care of the structural and behavioural dimension of bureaucracy. The agency of change should have high degree of purposiveness

which alone can ensure proportionate success. The more successful developmental agency, the greater is clarity of policy objectives. Success of developmental agency tends to have a much greater specificity goals. The greater the political development and broader the political leadership, the greater is the success of development administration. The more successful the developmental agency, the greater is the accent on the development of administrative capability. The managerial systems tends to put broader organisation and development in successful developmental agencies. The more successful the developmental agency, the greater is the degree of autonomy. The higher the success of the developmental agency, the greater was its commitment to change. Similarly, there will be a greater propensity towards achievement of change goals. Thus, the more successful developmental agencies tend to have a high level of commitments in the administrative personnel to bring about change. The more successful the developmental administration, the more democratic and less authoritarian or status based appear to be the functioning style of the agencies. The quality of organisational leadership directly affects successful development. Flexibility of rules and regulations also depends on the more successful developmental administration. Successful developmental administration is based considerably on a positive and healthy attitude towards citizen clintle. In short, the structure of bureaucracy and the behaviour of bureaucracy are inter-dependent and an effective combination of environment with structural and behavioural factors ensures its proper functioning. In short, there is nothing to suggest that bureaucracy cannot be utilised for development.⁵

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Prospects - Theoretical and practical of bureaucracy working as an effective agent of social change and development.

The foregoing analysis has brought out certain characteristics of bureaucracy which affect its functions. Therefore, I am now suggesting certain modifications in the structure of bureaucracy so as to make it more purposive. Bureaucracy has to provide services and technical services and guidance in respect of making resources available, for developmental activities. This means mobilization of resources, creation of new resources as well as satisfactory distribution of resources. This entire process of mobilization, creation and distribution of resources necessitates continuous interaction between the bureaucrats and the leaders of the people as well as the people at large. Feedback from the community becomes very vital. This brings to our notice the importance of the internal system of bureaucracy and its relationship with the external system. The internal system of bureaucracy comprises mainly of recruitment of the personnel, allocation of tasks and responsibilities, hierarchy, rules and regulations, system of promotion, rewards and punishments, sanctions etc. Bureaucracy is essentially to ensure division of labour and co-ordination so as to facilitate the attainment of the goals. All this would mean that recruitment must be scrupulously done on the basis of qualifications and competence and no extraneous pressure should be allowed to affect recruitment. The same can be said about promotion, sanctions etc. Bureaucracy has to relate itself to the external system. However, in order to maintain its autonomy and even efficiency, it should not allow the external system to unduly interfere in its working. What I have in mind, are specifically, the responsibility of

bureaucracy to the weaker sections. Because it is a matter of common knowledge as to how the affluent sections tend to prevent bureaucracy from discharging its responsibility, particularly towards the weaker sections. Therefore, stratification of power, money should not be allowed to interfere with the working of bureaucracy. Every support must be given to a conscientious bureaucrat who is discharging his duties with integrity and social sensitivity. One reads about an honest bureaucrat who tries to implement tenancy legislation effectively, getting transferred because of the displeasure he has incurred of the landed aristocracy. Thus, theoretically speaking the formalism of bureaucracy must be matched by informal organisation and the proverbial distance between the bureaucrat and the people must also be done away with, when necessary. Emergence of primary groups also need not be regarded as totally undesirable. Rules and regulations also should be sufficiently flexible and in any case should be applied without fear or favour. Instead of stability of the system, change of the system should be the major concern of bureaucracy. The pecking order in bureaucracy also needs to be modified in the light of the demands of the field situation. A two way communication amongst all the ranks of bureaucracy is a must. Appropriate sensitisation of bureaucrats to the needs of the weaker sections is also equally important. Inlet and outlet mechanisms must operate effectively with bureaucracy which will help it maintain its internal autonomy so as to effectively satisfy the external system.

It has been pointed out earlier as to how the administrative set-up in India can as well be geared to the performance of developmental tasks. Observations have been made that bureaucracy tends to share role perceptions and

values whether it is engaged in developmental or non-developmental tasks. Moreover, the structural characteristics are also more or less common. What is really necessary is to make it more client oriented. This can be done only by mobilizing public opinion and even action. There are several groups and voluntary associations working in rural areas and also in urban areas which make it possible for the weaker sections to exercise and exert pressure on bureaucracy in respect of discharging their responsibility towards the weaker sections. A vigilant public alone can prevail on bureaucracy to do its duty. It is heartening to note that there are several educated men and women who have dedicated themselves to organise the weaker sections in order to get their due demands satisfied. Creation of public opinion through press, meetings, propaganda is the first step. However, mobilization of people for demonstration, action etc. also cannot be ruled out. In fact, the latter step is equally important. Wherever, both these steps are taken, proper results can be ensured. As mentioned earlier, developmental activity is not confined to mere enhancement of economic prosperity of the nation, but it also requires proper distribution and creation of everyone's capacity so that he or she can help himself or herself without any external aid or intervention. This would always mean a continuous assessment of the action and the modalities utilised. Thus, the use of bureaucracy for development means a continuous revision and evaluation of goals, tasks and mechanisms, then alone it can be truly rational. Of course, rationality in this context is imbued with a social purpose.

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