

Indian Bureaucracy

Syllabus:GS IV - Ethics, Integrity and Aptitude.

Civil/Public Service Values and Ethics in Public Administration

Why in news?

Recent article on the conflict between democracy and fair administration highlights the issues on bureaucracy Integrity in India.

What is bureaucracy?

- **Bureaucracy** - It refers to a system of administration characterised by complex rules, hierarchical structures, and formal procedures.
- **Definition** - Max Weber defined it as the only legal-rational authority to exercise the state's legitimate power.
- **Role in administration** - It is the core of any public administration.
- It helps to realize the dream of true democracy and bridge the gap between the people and their representatives.
- **In India** - Though colonial in origin, it was deeply Indian in ethos and spirit.
- Its importance becomes even more pronounced in India, the world's largest functioning democracy with the largest population.
- Independent India's bureaucracy is an institution to which the common citizen looks up.

What constitutes Indian Bureaucracy?

- It consists of officers working under the Central and All India Civil Services and the State Civil Services.
- **Top bureaucrats** - Among the Central and All India Services, the highest-ranking officers form the most elite group under the Central Government of India.
 - Indian Administrative Service (IAS),
 - Indian Police Service (IPS)
 - Indian Revenue Service (IRS), and others.
- Each of these services plays a specific role in India's public administration.
- Among them, the IAS occupies a unique role, as its officers are preferred for senior positions in government at both the state and central levels.
- **State-level Bureaucracy** - Officers of the State Civil Services are selected by individual states.
- They work entirely under the state government and different services like
 - State Administrative Service (SAS)

- State Police Service
- State Revenue Service.
- Among them, the SAS, much like the IAS, occupies key positions within the state-level administration.

What are the strengths and weakness of bureaucracy in India?

Bureaucrats are referred to as the **steel frame of India** by Sardar Patel, bureaucrats are responsible for implementing government policies and making decisions.

Strengths of Indian bureaucracy

- **Provide continuity in governance and administration** - It ensures that policies and programs initiated by one government are carried forward by the next.
- **Deliver efficient governance** - It provides a *professional and experienced cadre* of administrators who are well-trained in various aspects of governance, such as policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation.
- **Check on the power of elected officials** - It ensures that decisions are made *based on merit* and not political considerations.
- **Ethical bureaucracy** - Ethical leaders are considered honest, caring, and principled individuals who make *balanced and fair decisions*.
- Such ethical and conscious leadership can promote integrity within institutions.
- **Prioritise public welfare** - In the Covid times when everyone feared death, these brave officers *set aside their personal lives*, responsibilities and fears to serve the nation, with some even laying down their lives.

Weakness of Indian Bureaucracy

- **Lack of accountability & transparency** - *Opacity in governance* and lack of accountability leads to culture of impunity where civil servants can get away with poor performance or even corruption without fear of consequences.
- **Sluggish administration** - It include *delays in justice and bureaucratic red tape*, with high-profile cases dragging on for years due to inefficiencies.
- **Abuse of power** - Incidents such as *extrajudicial killings, custodial deaths*, and police inaction in politically sensitive cases raise serious concerns about fairness in administration.
- **Erosion of trust** - *Corruption, bureaucratic apathy* during disasters, and undue political influence over decision-making further erode trust.
- There are also concerns about *favouritism and cronyism*.
- **Bureaucratic culture of hierarchy & seniority** - They can *stifle innovation* and discourage younger civil servants from taking risks.

What lies ahead?

- **Strengthening public trust** - It can be done by increased transparency and accountability in governance.
- **Reforming police** - Reforms can be taken to transform policing into a service-oriented institution.
- **Making People-centric services** - For instance, the khaki should symbolize unimpeachable integrity in thoughts, words, and deeds.
- **Embody ethical leadership** - Encouraging bureaucrats to develop ethical behaviour as a defining personality trait and to have an ethical consideration in public life.

Every great institution is the lengthened shadow of a single man. His character determines the character of the organization. Only then can fair administration and democracy go hand in hand - Ralph Waldo Emerson

Reference

[The Indian Express| Bureaucracy and Fair Administration](#)

