



Administrative reforms in India: An analytical review

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Abstract

The administration is an instrument of social change. It is essential for preserving civilization, social harmony and most of all for successful planning without a clear, efficient, responsive and sensitive administration. The administration is of pivotal importance in the formation of a welfare state. The Administrative Reforms in India The terms “Administrative Reforms”, “Administrative Change” and “Administrative Reorganization” are used synonymously, although by strict definition, reform would stand for eradication of abuses in the existing system, change would mean modifications to suit ideological or socioeconomic environment, and reorganization would be reconstructing the existing system to suit current needs and new demands. In India, Administrative Reforms signify all these three aspects, Remodelling to suit political change since Independence, change in character and behavior to cope with the new socioeconomic environment and programs for the removal of evils that have crept into the system all behave urgent since independence. Administrative reform is therefore a risk, a gamble, in which the odds are heavily against success because once institutionalized, administrative arrangements tend to stick and old habits die hard. It can take a generation for administrative behavior and values to change appreciably. The paper addresses Historical and New administrative reforms in India.

Keywords: administrative reforms, administrative change, administrative reorganization, socioeconomic environment, nepotism and corruption, accountability, transparency, RTI etc.

Introduction

The terms “Administrative Reforms”, Administrative Change” and “Administrative Reorganization” are used synonymously, although by strict definition, reform would stand for eradication of abuses in the existing system, change would mean modifications to suit ideological or socio-economic environment, and reorganisation would be reconstructing the existing system to suit current needs and new demands. In India, Administrative Reforms signify all these three aspects remodelling to suit political change since Independence, change in character and behaviour to cope with the new socio-economic environment and programs for the removal of evils that have crept into the system all behave urgent since independence^[1]. Administrative reform is therefore a risk, a gamble, in which the odds are heavily against success because once institutionalized, administrative arrangements tend to stick and old habits die hard. It can take a generation for administrative behaviour and values to change appreciably^[2]. There are hardly any magical keys to administrative reforms. It is a long term process that requires the investment of talent, zeal and commitment, scarce resources and above all time whereas governments are usually short term and look for quick solutions. Reforms, is urged by Caiden, ‘tossed around like a boat in a storm since from conception to finality, is a long, arduous and difficult journey beset with numerous obstacles, unforeseen perils and unexpected surprises^[3]. Actually, Administrative reform is not merely a technical exercise, instead it is a process involving the political interactions of stakeholders who actually determine the course of events. Many definitions fail to appreciate ‘the politics of

reform’ and are thus unable to comprehend why reform programs have introduced measures they incorporate and why they may succeed, many operational definitions contains in excess of instrumental rationality^[4]. Caiden characterizes Administrative Reform as ‘an artificial inducement of administrative transformation against resistance^[5]. He underlines the following characteristics, first, it enrich a thorough reconstruction of the machinery of government which, in effect means a complete or partial overhauling of the prevalent administrative structure that appears to have lost its momentum in the changed circumstances, second, it aim at systematic transformation and not piecemeal change, permanent alterations and purely cosmetic touches, in structure, territorial organization, budget management, planning process and personnel practices to reduce corruptions, incompetence and red tape. Third, the different sectors and programs are rationalized and reorganized for more effective performance. Finally the machinery of government is simplified and streamlined to eliminate unnecessary duplication, reduce inconvenience and minimize pluralism. The leaders in government were confident that the pressures of democratic command, quality of public enthusiasm, and ingrained discipline of the old instrument face the gigantic tasks before the country. Public administration reforms can target objectives concerning improvements to public life, such as eliminating patronage, nepotism and corruption, increasing representativeness, fostering the participation of citizens and groups and enhancing accountability and transparency. In addition, every administrative reform has a political dimension, since the

notion of improvement implies a choice of values. As a result, any ensuing change will be viewed as a reform or a setback depending on the ideology of the observer or actor involved. Thus, for example, the privatization of state-owned enterprises, the introduction of user fees for public services, programs of employment equity or access to information will be seen as reforms by some and their opposite by others. Admittedly, a technical reform to streamline bureaucratic procedures will carry little political freight, but even so, it is likely to produce winners and losers. The emergence of typewriters in the 19th century created an opening in the employment market for women, who quickly familiarized themselves with this new technology, at the same time, one of the oldest professions of the world—that of scribe—underwent a transformation at the expense of those whose primary qualification had consisted in having fine handwriting, ultimately, most reforms run up against resistance of inertia, thus forcing their proponents to engage in some measures of advocacy. Quite a few reforms have grown out of periods of crisis or national trauma. Thus, in an atmosphere of recriminations over the poor performance of the country's armed forces during the Crimean War, in 1855 Great Britain enacted a set of reforms creating an upper tier of civil servants to be recruited on the basis of examinations. Likewise, the French government established the *Ecole libre des sciences politiques* in the aftermath of its defeat during the France-Prussian War of 1870-71. Similar causes were also at work during the founding of France's *Ecole Nationale d'Administration* in 1945. In 1883, in reaction to the assassination of Presidential Garfield by a rejected office-seeker, the American government established the United States Civil Service Commission and introduced the system of civil service entrance examinations. In the last 30 years, apprehensions of a public finance crisis have prompted reforms aimed either at scaling back public services or at making them less expensive and more competitive ^[6]. An administrative reform may also be instigated by a research branch or one or more line units charged with delivering products or services. However, pressures for reform often originate outside of the administration and may come from; a new government or minister, a political party, a parliamentary committee, a commission of inquiry, a lobby, a users association, the media—in short, all political stakeholders. Over the last few decades, two new types of agents of reform have appeared on the scene. Internally, management and policy consulting firms have become omnipresent ^[7] and, supranationally, international organizations such as the UN, the OECD, the World Bank and the European Community, as well as NGOs such as Transparency International, have become powerful drivers of reform. Administrative reform entails a transfer of knowledge that goes beyond that which is generated in the course of regular operations. Such knowledge can come from internal studies (whether occasional or systematic), but most often they originate externally. The most widespread phenomenon is emulation—that is, the adoption of an idea or practice that has been successfully implemented elsewhere. In this instance, prior success is reassuring to the administration that adopts a practice, for it can then forego having to perform an in-depth analysis of its own ^[8].

Need for Administrative Reforms

The distinguishing characteristic of modernised social system is its ability to deal with continuous systematic transformation. Administrative reform is but a part of the universality of this change, for administration is nothing but a sub-culture, a social sub-system reflecting the values of the wider society. Therefore, society has to change in order to:

- Free itself from the shackles of traditionalism;
- Change relationships with environment;
- Adopt fresh innovative culture;
- Adopt new knowledge and technology, and
- Crave for a few order through elimination of old ills and evaluation of comparative system-values.

Administration must also correspondingly change to be in step with the 'outer' modernisation process. Or else, a serious disequilibrium would set in, resulting in an agonising imbalance, dysfunctional maladjustments and eventual goal displacement. The tension this state of affairs generates constitutes the central aspect of reform-movement. Administrative reform, from this angle, is dependent variables indeed, successful reforms need to be preceded or at least accompanied by necessary variations in societal values that would make reform-assimilation possible ^[9]. The administrative reform thus cannot, and does not, exist in vacuum, immunised or isolated from other socio-political influences. Administrative reform is, in Fred W. Riggs expressive phrase, a "problem of dynamic balancing". Since Public Administration functions within a political context, its basic character, content and style of functioning must be greatly influenced by the political environment, its institutional dynamics and processes, is not merely setting national goals, priorities, or deciding between competing values, allocating resources but also in devising the most effective instrument for translating these policies into successful programme realities. Today's India significantly testifies this interactive interdependence of the political and reformatory processes. Added to this, the spectacular advances in science and technology, state's pervasive role in managing national assets and resources, controlling the entire economy through newer forms of institution making, and ushering in an egalitarian social system. And all these throw up not merely a massive explosion of new tasks of unprecedented magnitude and dimension, they equally invariably require, just being equal to their complexity and scale, fundamental and foundational improvement in administrative capabilities. The latter, in turn, presupposes a long-range perspective planning, educational re-arrangement, skill-generation, attitude-formation and a host of other structural-functional administrative reorganisations, quite apart from adoption of new technologies of effective decision-making and implementative gadgets. This being the ecology of administrative reform, the success of administrative reform programmes postulates an inter-disciplinary and multi-dimensional approach ^[10].

Administrative Reforms for Good Governance

Good governance (efficient, effective, responsive, corruption free and citizen friendly) is central to the administration for

ensuring people's trust in government and promoting social harmony, political stability and economic development ^[11]. Administrative reforms have been initiated both in developed and developing countries to promote good governance, although, approaches and strategies vary across the countries depending upon their history, culture and socio-political economic development ^[12]. Good governance, in developed countries, has been identified with the market and new public management models to reduce costs and enhance the accountability of administrators and satisfaction of the citizens. Privatization, corporatisation and contracting of public activities, competition, entrepreneurial ability and managerial autonomy to the managers are the guiding principles for administrative reforms. It's main emphasis has been to produce more goods and services to the satisfaction of the citizens with low budget, less bureaucracy and few rules ^[13]. Good governance in developing countries has been identified with political (pluralism, participation, decentralisation, human rights and consensus), economic (economic liberalisation, private ownership, investment, growth-poverty alleviation), social (civil society and non-governmental organisations or communitarianism, social capital or social cohesion), legal (rule of law and independent judiciary), and administrative (accountability, transparency, less corruption, efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness) reforms by the international development and donor agencies ^[14]. In other words, good governance is strictly connected with institutionalised values such as democracy, observance of human rights and rule of law and greater efficiency within the public sector. Their main emphasis is on removal of corruption and strengthening of civil society, people's participation, transparency, administrative efficiency and accountability ^[15].

The World Bank argued for raising the state's capability and effectiveness by institution building and restraining corruption ^[16]. In other words, the State and its administration have to act as catalysts to facilitate markets and civil society to produce more goods and services with minimum cost. International Monetary Fund (IMF) along with other organisations insisted on reforms in public sector, civil services, property rights, contract enforcement and procuring practices along with control of corruption, rule of law and prudence in financial management ^[17]. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) identified good governance with elements such as consensus, people's participation, transparency, accountability, effectiveness, equity and rule of law as a part of its agenda for social, human and gender development in developing countries ^[18]. Other international development agencies including Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Swiss International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and United States Assistance in International Development (USAID) also provided assistance for promoting good governance as a part of their assistance/aid to developing countries. Good governance in OECD countries is identified with public service ethics. Public service ethics is pre-requisite for public trust, which is a keystone of good governance. According to OECD report, public service is public trust. Citizens expect

public servants to serve the public interest with fairness and to manage public resources properly on a daily basis. Fair and reliable public services inspire public trust and create favourable environment for maintaining social and political order, economic prosperity and business, thus contributing to the well-functioning of markets and thereby promoting economic growth ^[19]. They suggested core values drawn from social norms, democratic principles and professional ethics and guiding principles for expected behaviour of public officers. These include impartiality, legality, integrity, transparency, efficiency, equality, responsibility and justice in that order of preference ^[20].

Administrative Reforms in India

The administration is an ancient alert, common to almost all countries and all levels of governments. It is an aspect of governmental activity which is very old. It is as old as human history with the increase in the scope and activities of the state, the administration has become all the more important in modern time. Its importance has tremendously increased from the cradle to the grave. The administration is an instrument of social change. It is essential for preserving civilization, social harmony and most of all for successful planning without a clear, efficient, responsive and sensitive administration. The administration is of pivotal importance in the formation of a welfare state. There was a time when people had no expectation from public authorities but today life is shaped by the quality of administration. A welfare state, having a planned economy and a republican constitution, cannot function except through a widespread and integrated structure of administration. In simple term, the administration is securing cooperation in order to get the work of the world accomplished as a process, the administration is so much a matter of analysis and synthesis that these functions should become second nature to the administrator. As a career, administration is an activity challenge, for its calls on many aspects of a man's nature and the abilities and applied them to stick social problems, administration is of concern to every citizen because the service he receives, the taxes he pays, and even the personal freedom enjoys depends so largely on what the administrator does or fails to do. Many of the sharpest social issues of the modern age, including how to combine freedom and organization resolve around this bureaucratize area of administration, naming administration a central interest of political theory and philosophy ^[21]. Public administration is a continuous process and in this sense it is always undergoing reform. Thus in public administration, reform is a journey rather than a destination ^[22]. Reforms are an obvious response to the new challenges confronting the state institution managing public affairs, what lies at the root of such an exercise, is the effort enhancing administrative capability in the changed scenario. The term "administrative reform has different meanings in different nations (such as the United States and Europe) it means to reform the administrative system". It is a process of change administrative structures or procedures within the public services because they seem to have become inappropriate in the changed social and political environment. In other nation including the developing countries, administrative system is considered as an instrument for social and economic transformation ^[23].

First Administrative Reform Commission (1966-70)

It is in a time of grave economic crisis that the attention of a nation's leadership turns to administrative reform. After the armed conflict with China in 1962 and the successive years of drought, the economic situation of the country was worsening. Around 1965, India apparently found itself at the nadir of its fortunes. In 1966, the most comprehensive examination of India's Public Administration was entrusted to a high-powered Administrative Reforms Commission under the Chairmanship of Morarji Desai (later K. Hanumanthriya). Hitherto, similar commissions were as a rule manned by civilservants. The ARC made a departure from such a practice as its membership was drawn from public life, which was a distinct feature. The ARC was the single most comprehensive investigation into the country's public administration in independent India ^[24].

Second Administrative Reforms Commission

The Government of India set up the Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) on August 31, 2005 under the chairmanship of Shri Veerappa Moily to prepare a detailed blueprint for revamping the Public Administration System. The commission was asked to suggest measures to achieve a "proactive, responsive, accountable, sustainable and efficient administration for the country at all levels of the government.²⁷ Further, unlike the first ARC, the commission of inquiry was asked to look into about. The commission consists of the following (i) Ramachandran - Chairperson, (ii) Dr. A.P. Mukherjee - Member, (iii) Dr. A.H. Kalra - Member, (iv) Dr. Jayaprakash Narayan - Member, (v) Veenita Rai - Member Secretary. Veerappa Moily resigned with effect from 1st April, 2009. V. Ramachandran was appointed Chairman. Dr. Jayaprakash Narayan resigned with effect from 1st September 2007.²⁸ The Commission was to exclude from its purview the detailed examination of administration of defense, railways, external affairs, security and intelligence, as also subjects such as countries, state relations, and judicial reforms etc. which were already being examined by other bodies. The commission was however, be free to take the problems of this sector into account in recommending re-organization of the machinery of the government or any of its service agencies.²⁹ The decade of the 1980s had witnessed the gradual shift of political power from the Indian National Congress to the non-Congress parties at the state level. The discourse on administrative reforms during this period reflects responses to greater assertion of states and the onset of globalization. During the rule of Rajiv Gandhi ^[25], the Government relied heavily on in-service training to strengthen the administrative capabilities of its public functionaries. The period was also characterized by the appointment of the "L.K. Jha Economic Reforms ^[26] Commission", which recommended a shift in emphasis from regulation to development. The 73rd and 74th amendments made the local bodies as the third stratum of the governance system, making almost uniform introduction of the three-tier system of local government throughout the country. Since then every administrative reform undertaken at the central and state level had been making references to the efficient working of the local bodies particularly in the area of service delivery ^[27]. Given the fact that local bodies are the implementing mechanisms of several central programmes, the extent to which such programmes can succeed became

contingent upon the robustness and good practices of these local bodies. Since then two important reports have been submitted to the central government namely, the Report of the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution with Justice M.N. Venkatchaliah as the Chairman and Reports of the 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission – headed by M. Veerappa Moily ^[28]. The Venkatchellaiah commission submitted its report in 2002. The Venkatchellaiah commission recommended decentralization of power to the District level ^[29], making it also the unit of development administration and planning. Other measures suggested include computerizing the land records, downsizing the bureaucracy and introduction of new management system, creation of autonomous personnel boards, placement of the specialists under the generalists, enactment of the freedom of information legislation by the Parliament, creation of a National Science and Technology Commission under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister for policy making, planning, promoting, and funding of higher scientific and technological research, ethical and moral elements in governance, enactment of a public interest disclosure act to protect the informants, enactment of a comprehensive law ensuring a public servant's liability for damages caused to the state, law for confiscation of illegally acquired assets of holders of public offices, constitutional amendment requiring the appointments of the Lokpal at the centre and Lokayuktas in states were some of the recommendations ^[30].

Finally, as anti-corruption measures, the commission recommends the streamlining of the existing Vigilance Commissions at the union and state levels and the Lokayuktas (Ombudsman) in the states. It reiterates the enactment of a 80 parliamentary statute instituting the central Lokpal (Ombudsman) first recommended by ARC-I but not implemented yet (2nd ARC, 15th report: 46). It is interesting and useful to take a composite and comparative look at the major recommendations of the ARC-I and ARC-II ^[31] and also ascertain the extent to which these have been implemented. As regards the implementation of the recommendations, India's record of administrative reforms is shown to be not so promising. This is attributable to the vested interest of the political and bureaucratic classes, the weakness of the class of bourgeoisie, fragmented electoral mandates and divided governments due to coalition governments. The New Economic Policy led to the replacement of the mixed economy, where the public sector controlled the commanding heights of the economy, by a market-friendly economy heralding the era of retreat of the state. The example of the developed countries, through the process of reinvention and reengineering, to reduce the size of the government and make it more efficient and effective brought the very same ideas to the Indian shores. Thus we also started to hear terms like downsizing, right sizing, privatization, contracting etc in our public affairs. This required the Government of India to adopt the NPM type reforms, which primarily ensure efficiency and effectiveness by introducing market oriented mechanisms in public administration. The failure of governance in India has different dimensions such as the gap between the written law, political claims and ground reality of deprivation and poverty. Constitutional guarantees remain unfulfilled and laws

unimplemented with a regularity that is awesome. Public services are poor and inadequate. Along with rightsizing public services, value for money, good financial system, efficiency and audit, proper monitoring and evaluation are also needed for an effective administration ^[32].

Recent Initiatives towards Rightsizing

A new scheme - 'Optimization of Direct Recruitment to Civilian Posts' was introduced in 2001. All requirements of Direct Recruitment were to be scrutinized to ensure that fresh recruitment is limited to one per cent of the total Civilian staff strength. This Scheme was initially to be implemented for a period of five years. It covered all Central Government Ministries/Departments/Organizations including the Railways, Dept. of Posts, Telecom, autonomous bodies wholly or partly financed by the Government, statutory Corporations /Bodies, Civilians in Defence and non-Combat posts in Para Military Forces. Since about three per cent staff retires every year, this measure was expected to reduce manpower by two per cent per annum, with a reduction of ten per cent in five years. Each Central Government Ministry/Department was required to prepare an Annual Direct Recruitment Plan covering the requirement of all cadres managed by it. Any indent for Direct Recruitment was to be placed on the Recruiting Agency only after a certificate of clearance for the vacancies had been obtained from the appropriate Screening Committee. Ministries/Departments/Units have to obtain a 'No Objection Certificate' from the Surplus Cell of the DOPT & DG, Employment & Training that suitable personnel were not available for appointment against posts for direct recruitment. Posts to be abolished under recommendations of the Staff Inspection Units (SIU) and the Expenditure Reforms Commission (ERC) were outside the purview of the scheme and not to be included in these calculations ^[33].

Recent Public – Centric Initiatives

Among the various public – Centric initiatives taken by the Government of India, three stand out – (1) The 73rd and 74th amendments providing constitutional status to local governance; (2) The Right to Information Act, 2005, promoting transparency in administration; and the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005, which aims to provide social security to the rural poor.

Decentralized Governance: The Panchayati Raj System

The evolution of the Panchayati Raj system can be traced to the Community Development Projects inaugurated on 2nd October, 1952. However, when the Community Development Projects and the National Extension Service failed to take off, a committee under the chairmanship of Shri Balwantray Mehta was appointed to pin point the causes of failure of these institutions. The lack of community participation was held responsible for the failure of the Community Development Projects. The Balwantray Mehta Committee recommended a three tier Panchayati Raj system – the Zilla Parishad at the District level, a Panchayat Samiti at the Block level, and a village panchayat at the village level. There was direct election only at the village level. The Panchayati Raj system produced mixed results in that no real powers were given to these institutions; elections were not held regularly; and

government officials continued to dominate elected functionaries. In some states the District Collector was the ex-officio Chairmen of all the standing committees. The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments, 1993, seek to give more powers to local bodies. Elections have been made mandatory and 1/3 seats reserved for women. However, the functioning of these institutions has not been uniformly satisfactory. States like Kerala and West Bengal appear to be doing much better than the other states. The 35 reservation of seats for women remains a farce in the backward northern states where the husband or son exercises the power on behalf of the women ^[34].

Administrative Accountability

Maintenance of professional ethics and standards of the bureaucracy is at the core of personnel management. Though the Department of Personnel and Training provides the guidelines for maintenance of the integrity of the public services and eradication of corruption, the Ministries/Departments and offices of the Government of India, have the direct responsibility for maintaining discipline and integrity of their staff. The Central Vigilance Commission was set up in February 1964, on the recommendation of the Committee on Prevention of Corruption headed by K. Santhanam. Conceived as the apex vigilance organization, the CVC has been kept free of control from any executive authority. The Commission monitors all vigilance activities under the Central Government and advises various authorities in Central Government Organizations in planning, executing and reviewing vigilance work. The vigilance units in the departments/organizations, to which the advisory jurisdiction of the CVC extends are headed by the Chief Vigilance Officers. A special investigation unit should be attached to the proposed Lokpal (Rashtriya Lokayukta)/State Lokayuktas/Vigilance Commission, to investigate allegations of corruption against investigative agencies. This unit should be multi-disciplinary and should also investigate cases of allegations of harassment against the investigating agency. Similar units should also be set up in States.

The Right to Information Act, 2005

The Right to Information Act is perhaps the single most important mechanism designed so far to ensure the accountability of administration. The main aim of the Right to Information Act, 2005 is to provide a regime of right to information for citizens to secure access to information under the control of public authorities, with a view to promoting transparency and accountability in the working of every public authority. It envisages the constitution of a Central Information Commission and state Information Commissions. The Act states that every public authority should make a constant endeavour to provide information to the public at regular intervals through various means of communication, including the internet, so that the public have minimum resort to the use of this Act to obtain information. The Right to Information Act (RTI) covers central, State and local governments, and all bodies owned, controlled or substantially financed; non-government organization substantially financed, directly or indirectly by funds provided by the appropriate Government. Thus, it covers the executive, judiciary and the

legislature. The Act is a major improvement on the Freedom of Information Act, 2002, which never came into force. The RTI was passed on May 12, 2005. However, intelligence and security agencies like the IB, RAW etc. are outside its purview. Also, the government, under pressure from the bureaucracy, has agreed that notings by officials on government files should not be made public under the Act ^[35].

Information Technology (IT) and Administrative Reforms

Information Technology (IT) is emerging as a major instrument in administrative reforms. Public Administration as a discipline has been overly concerned with making it scientific and rational to enhance its legitimacy. Finding the one best way would help the Internationalization of Public Administration. The trends in this direction can be discerned starting with the Scientific Management Movement and its impact on the Administrative Science Movement and the coining of POSTCoRB the Weberian bureaucracy presented the world with the universally applicable model of organization. The IT revolution once again highlights the importance of universal application of technology. The Government of India as well as the State Governments has been in the forefront in bringing about the IT revolution. The objective is to empower the citizens as well as the administrators ^[36].

National e-Governance Plan

A major initiative taken by the Government for ushering in e-Governance on national scale, called National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) was approved on 16th May 2006. The NeGP consists of 27 Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) encompassing 9 central MMPs, 11 State MMPs and 7 integrated MMPs that span multiple backend Ministries/Departments. It also includes 8 program support components aimed at creating the right governance and institutional mechanisms, core infrastructure, policies & standards and the necessary legal framework for adoption of e-Governance in the country. It is implemented at the Central, State and Local Government levels ^[37].

Citizen-oriented Paradigm

The corporate millennium has brought into focus, a new concept of governance based on the interests of the shareholders, i.e. the citizens, which has signaled the role of transparency, accountability and meritbased management and a sense of morality and ethics that rests on the principle of "concern for others." An ethical organization, more so, a government, not only stands for people with a set of values, but a positive attitude which generates a culture within the organization in which every member feels a sense of loyalty and belonging and the leaders are responsible for initiating dialogues across a wide range of levels and functions so as to operationalize values in practical policies. Modernization of government and public administration involves a redefinition of government responsibilities. The state system of the 21st century, will have to see a redistribution of duties and responsibilities between government, business and society. This would require introduction of modern management techniques with quality control, budgeting and cost-benefit analysis. In future, public authorities are meant to be result-

oriented in providing public services. Modern management and e-government are two central means of achieving fundamental changes in public administration. The goal is an administration that does more and costs less. E-government projects are not only modernizing public agencies and authorities, but also making administrative procedures more transparent for ordinary citizens, which in turn, also makes new demands on personnel to be more accountable ^[38].

Combating Corruption

From the foregoing discussion, it is more than evident that the concept of quality governance is premised on a corruption-free administrative system. Combating corruption for sustainable development calls for: (a) reducing opportunities and incentives for corrupt behaviour and increasing the sense of accountability on the part of public officials, and (b) effective implementation of anti-corruption measures, which would imply that measures should be logically consistent with regard to the phasing of a time table for speedy investigation and conviction; a strong political commitment to implement the strategies and enforcing anticorruption measures; and people's active participation from below in the enforcement of administrative, legal and judicial measures, thus mobilizing the public against corruption in public life. Apart from the above fundamental conditions, it must be emphasized that fighting corruption requires: ^[39] (a) formation of a national coordinating body that should be responsible for devising and following up on a strategy against corruption, along with a citizen's oversight board; (b) the existence of a high powered independent prosecuting body to investigate and prosecute all such known cases of corruption; (c) and the setting up of special courts for trying such cases at a stretch so that the cases come to their legitimate conclusion without any delay; (d) thoroughly overhauling and reforming the system of electoral laws and economic regulations, minimizing the temptation to indulge in corruption practice; (e) enactment of an appropriate legislation to limit the number of Ministries and Departments both at the Centre and the states so that the temptation of expanding ministries only for political gains could be minimized; and (f) by providing specialized technical assistance to anti-corruption agencies, by organizing high-level anti-corruption workshops or strategic consulting or hiring international investigations to track down ill-gotten deposits overseas ^[40].

Conclusion

Administrative reforms in India have aimed at three basic goals: improving the efficiency of administration internally and in relation to service delivery to the citizens; maintaining the thin line of demarcation between political neutrality of administration and party politics; and curbing corruption. A systematic empirical studies or even a series of such micro studies in a large number are still awaited. The major problem that administrative reforms in India face is the abysmal record of lack of implementation of the series of reports of the various commissions reviewed above. Even a few reforms like the creation of agencies and regulatory authorities within the bureaucratic apparatus and the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments concerning the Panchayati Raj and Nagar Raj at local levels are seriously deficient in autonomy, power, and

finances. The vigilance commissions at the centre and in the state and the Lokayuktas in the states are again be devilled by the same deficiencies. Weak governance, manifesting itself in poor service delivery, excessive regulation, and uncoordinated and wasteful public expenditure, all damagingly impinge on development and social indicators. These are strong words, but he is not alone in his withering assessment of the current state of the main instrument of executive authority in the country. Even the official Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2008), quoted in Saxena's monograph, is no less caustic: 'The state apparatus is largely inefficient with most functionaries serving no useful purpose. The bureaucracy is tardy, inefficient and unresponsive. Corruption is all-pervasive, eating into the vitals of our system, undermining economic growth, distorting competition and disproportionately hurting the poor and marginalized citizens. Criminalization of politics continues unchecked, with money and muscle power playing a large role in elections. Abuse of authority at all levels in all organs of state has become the bane of our democracy.' Another official paper in 2009 brought out by the Department of Administrative Reforms agrees again with remarkable candour, that 'the state and its apparatus, Preface • xi including the bureaucracy are treated not so much as a means of generating public goods but as a means of generating benefits for the particular group that controls the state. All of these would certainly help make governments more externally accountable. But his paper could have focused more on ways of further strengthening the operation of India's landmark right to information law, which in my opinion remains the most profound reform in governance in Independent India, deepening democracy by making the executive potentially accountable to its ordinary citizens. Any discussion on administrative reforms is incomplete without reflections on ways to defend it from onslaughts, protect its users from attacks, improve the redress of grievances, pushing its frontiers as in expanding the duties of governments to proactively place more and more information in the public domain, without the need for any application, and by establishing systems of pre-legislative consultation. The only pressure for governance reform can come from outside the system of power and its fruits, by deepening democracy, by expanding voice, and non-violent collective alternate power of disadvantaged people. Until then, the poor masses of India will continue to carry the burdens of a bloated, corrupt and unaccountable government.

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