

1. In an age of rapid technological advancements, the role of bureaucracy must be reinvented. Comment.

Approach

Define what is the role of bureaucracy in traditional sense. In next part write what are the various technological changes which the bureaucracy is going through. In next part write what measures can be taken to equip the bureaucracy for these changes. Write a summary based conclusion.

Introduction

Bureaucracy or the Civil Service constitutes the permanent and professional part of the executive organ of government. It is responsible for implementation of policies and serves as a link between the government and the people. However, due to rapid technological advancements, its role is undergoing transformation in the 21st century.

Body

Changes in role of bureaucracy:

- Service provider to service enabler- Due to digital technologies it has become a facilitator of services ensuring their hassle free operation. So rather than the earlier role of gatekeepers of essential services now they have become partners in the development process.
- Record keeping to database management- From keeping big logs of paperwork, it has shifted to maintain online database. Further the data is not just kept for posterity but rather with new age technologies of Big data, data mining the bureaucracy takes fact based decisions and make course corrections after analysing data regularly.
- Increased scrutiny in administration- Advent of social media and a hyper active media have increased scrutiny in bureaucratic functioning. The bureaucracy now has to be always on toes with performance parameters being constantly changing and also administration being made more transparent and accountable. The previous mindset of master mentality doesn't go well with the new generation, which constantly wants better and efficient administration.
- Changed public relations- Direct benefits, use of social media platforms like twitter are connecting government and public directly, minimising the role of bureaucracy in this sphere. Thus the bureaucracy are no longer the primary interface between the people and government.
- Online administration- Online grievance redressal, financial benefits to bank, public advisory over internet etc. have modified the way administration used to run. This has made decisions quicker, transparent and accountable. Thus the previous mechanism of corruption, middleman etc have to be shunned.

- Cybercrimes- Increased incidence of cybercrimes has made it a necessity for bureaucracy to be vigilant. The new crimes such as online bullying, identity theft, anonymous threats have to be tackled in a new way of administration.

Ways to reinvent the role of bureaucracy:

- Technical knowhow- Technical trainings need to be imparted to help bureaucrats deal with the existing tech challenges. This is done in Indian bureaucracy with officers being sent to universities for specific courses on data management, big data etc.
- Active social presence- Instead of being unapproachable to public, civil servants should try to address concerns and build public opinion about issues through social media.
- Be more media friendly: People want to learn what the government is doing and therefore in times of crises the bureaucrats should give information to media and therefore there should be skill development on media interactions.
- Empathy: The new age bureaucracy should be trained in empathy and compassion as the old role of controller has been done away.

Conclusion

The bureaucracy's role changes with the change in environment in which it operates. Therefore with the rapid technological revolution the bureaucracy also needs to be tech savvy, people friendly, facilitator of business, empathetic towards vulnerable population, and innovative and creative. Therefore to achieve this government of India has recently launched the mission Karmayogi to reinvent the bureaucracy. This along with the change in education policy in longterm will be beneficial for bringing changes in the bureaucratic setup.

2. What are the ways to ensure accountability of civil servants? How does accountability help in reducing corruption?

Approach

Define what is accountability in introduction. In next part write what are different ways to ensure accountability of civil servants and mention specific measures about India. Further write how does accountability help in reduction of corruption. In conclusion add some points on what can be done to ensure accountability in better way.

Introduction

Accountability can broadly be defined as the obligation of those holding power to take responsibility and be held answerable for their behaviour and actions. Further Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office. Accountability is one of the important ethical and administrative principle in public administration.

Body

Measures to ensure accountability

- Improve transparency around the feasibility of major projects: Make use of technology to digitise the information pertaining to major projects and fix deadlines for projects.
- Clarify what public services citizens get for their money: Strengthen the citizen charter at every major department and also make the utilisation of funds received by every department and how they have been spent every year transparent
- Reward for excellent work and review for failures: Promotion need to be based on excellent work done and not on basis of seniority. Also failures to achieve goals need to be accounted.
- Mandatory Social Auditing: States like Meghalaya have adopted social audit law, should be extended pan India
- Instil code of ethics among civil servants in line of code of conduct
- Clear delegation of roles and responsibilities with commensurate powers and resources: There needs to be a clear basis upon which specific roles and activities are assigned to specific levels of the system. Second, the delegation of roles and responsibilities must be accompanied by the delegation of resources that would allow functionaries to fulfil their roles. In the absence of this, delegation could end up confounding rather than strengthening accountability.

Measures to ensure accountability in India

- **Accountability to Parliament:** India has adopted Parliamentary democracy wherein the government is responsible to the Parliament which represents the people. The administrators are responsible to the political executives, who in turn are answerable to the Parliament.
- **Judicial Accountability:** The vast discretionary powers conferred on administrative authorities are required to be properly checked and controlled. If a citizen is aggrieved with any action or inaction of the administration, he may seek redress through a court of law.
- **Lokpal and Lokayukta:** It aims to prevent and control corruption at the central level and state level that would receive complaints relating to corruption against most categories of public servants and ensure that these are properly investigated and, where warranted, effectively prosecuted.
- **Central Vigilance Commission:** Designated Agency to receive written complaints for disclosure on any allegation of corruption or misuse of office and recommend appropriate action.
- **The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)** is an important constitutional functionary. He is a facet of the entire principle of accountability, which is the cornerstone of the Indian Constitution.
- **Through RTI Act to citizens:** The Right to information has been a revolutionary act in reducing the corruption in administration and making administration accountable. Various corruptions have been exposed in past from various land deals to fodder scams.
- **Further Citizens' oversight committees, Civil society/watchdog bodies** have helped to make administration responsible to people's need and to meet the targets of the concerned ministries.
- **Media** have been an important pillar in the accountability mechanism. The recent work done by the Dainik Bhaskar news paper in exposing the medical services in second wave of Covid has made many states accountable to the plight of citizens
- **Citizens charter:** This has made administration stick to the definite timelines which have made decision making quicker, erroneous officials are punished as done by government in granting of domicile in Jammu and Kashmir and state services in Telangana.

Accountability help reducing corruption in following ways.

- Accountability lead to the obligation of an individual or an organisation (either in the public or the private sectors) to accept responsibility for their activities, and to disclose them in a transparent manner. This includes the responsibility for decision-making processes, money or other entrusted property.
- Accountability result in answerability (the duty of an individual or organisation to answer to their decisions and actions) and punishments in case of malpractice.
- When the transparency and accountability is ensured the level of overall corruption tends to decrease in society.

- High levels of corruption and poor quality of public services, especially in developing countries, enhanced the demand for accountability from the civil society. RTI, redressal portals, CAG, article 311 have ensured this in India.
- Social accountability have been highly valued to curb corruption, especially in countries with a systematic problem of corruption and weak institutional systems. Therefore the social audits in MGNREGA and other services have made bureaucracy more accountable.

Way Forward

Thus accountability is very necessary to weed out corruption and ensure the lives of citizen are improved. Therefore these further measures can be taken.

- Resilient accountability: Governments today operate in a very complex environment with stakeholders consisting of different interest groups, competing demands on limited resources and complex legal requirements, therefore a more resilient accountability mechanism is required that encourages responsible governance.
- Ensuring public trust: Accountability facilitates a feedback mechanism between the Government and its citizens. So the accountability to the citizens is most critical in order to ensure sustenance of public trust and confidence in the existing democratic systems.
- The accountability mechanisms also need to keep pace with developments of modern government structures particularly in the era of digitalisation.
- There is also a need to sensitise the functionaries towards their responsibilities and duties in context of the accountability frameworks.
- Minimum element of discretion: For better transparency, not only should there be a Citizen's Charter but also well-defined Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for performing a job. Element of discretion needs to be minimised for ensuring responsiveness, transparency and accountability.

3. What role do civil servants play in strengthening democracy? Illustrate.**Approach**

Define civil services and contextualise to the democratic setup in India. In next part write what role they play in strengthening democracy with help of some examples. In next part mention some concerns. In conclusion mention what is the current issues in modern democracies and how civil servants are critical in this view.

Introduction

India is a democratic country and in this system, power is conferred to the people. The power is exercised through its designated representatives who have the command to manage them for particular period. The civil services by quality of its knowledge, experience and understanding of public affairs support the chosen representatives to device effectual policy and have great responsibility to implement these policies for the welfare of society and enhancement of nation. Thus the overall role of civil servants revolves around strengthening the democratic setup, protecting it and nurturing it for future generations.

Body

In following ways civil servants strengthens the democracy

- **Rule of Law:** The civil servants play a key role in ensuring the rule of law in the country. In various roles such as district magistrate, superintendent of police, revenue officers their role is to implement law to everyone equally regardless of any privileges and distinction.
- **Making Institutions Vibrant, Responsive and Accountable :** The civil servants are responsive towards people's need as its their role to handle problems of citizens. Further the leadership of civil servants have imparted accountability and credibility in past to institutions such as CAG, election commission to carry out their constitutional role without fear and fervour. This have ensured greater trust from public and confidence in governance.
- **Active Citizens' Participation – Decentralisation and Delegation :** The civil servants have taken help from citizens in various programs such as Swachh Bharat mission to beach cleaning exercise in Kerala and also the community policing measures in Mumbai after the riots to govern the area more effectively and make people part of government.
- **Transparency :** The policies of Right to information, citizens charters, public service delivery guarantee formulated and framed by bureaucracy have led to increased transparency.
- **Civil Service Reforms:** The reforms in appraisals mechanism which impart accountability in civil servants, make them more responsive to public have led to deepening the spirit of democracy and republic.

- Ethics in Governance : Various policies such as helping to formulate a rehabilitation policy for tribal population, handling of riots in different parts without any bias, empathy towards the citizens protesting, all these qualities have enhanced people's trust.
- Periodic & Independent Evaluation of the Quality of Governance
- Innovations in governance and constitutionalism: This has led to out of box thinking which has rebuilt confidence of people in civil servants. The initiatives like reformed response process in age of twitter with helping bust child smuggling models, reducing child pornography, solving cases of rape and abduction in quick manner have led to increased confidence of people.

Some examples:

- Since Independence of India, framing all sorts of democratic policies such as free and fair elections, establishment of heavy industries etc. are the works of civil servants for strengthening of newly formed democracy in India.
- K.C. Sivaramakrishnan, a civil servant, was the architect of 73rd and 74th amendment acts. Local governance institutions created by these acts led to strengthening of democracy to new level.
- Ashok Khemka is another renowned example of civil servant holding democratic values dear to him.
- The most recent "collector bro" of Kerala, Prasanth Nair, is known for his citizen centric approach.
- Similarly, Prime minister gave "Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Administration" to those civil servants who adopt innovative ideas and try to take public policies to every citizen of India.

Concerns remains

- Lack of professionalism and poor capacity building; especially in lower strata of services.
- Inefficient incentive systems that do not appreciate upright and outstanding civil servants
- Outmoded rules and procedures that restrict the civil servant from performing effectively
- Lack of adequate transparency and accountability procedures – there is also no safety for whistle blowers
- Arbitrary and whimsical transfers and promotions, insecurity in tenures impedes institutionalisation.
- Political interference and administrative acquiescence
- Gradual erosion in values and ethics

Conclusion

At a time when politics almost everywhere is leaning dangerously towards a centralised, authoritarian, national security state with a strong leader committed to

the ideology of cultural nationalism, role of permanent arm of governance that is 'civil services' becomes important in India. By virtue of its allegiance to the Constitution civil servants can keep strengthening democracy in India in future as well. It was for this reason that B.R Ambedkar had referred to civil services as strategic importance in nations democratic setup.

