

**BUREAUCRACY  
AND  
DEVELOPMENT  
IN  
MEGHALAYA**

**DEBASISH BHATTACHARJEE**

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A well organised and effective bureaucracy is considered to be one of the pre-requisites the massive tasks of nation building and development in the third world countries. But there is sharp criticism of the bureaucratic performance in almost all the third world countries. It is said that bureaucracy in these countries has failed to carry out the massive development programmes. Yet, scanty effort has so far been made to examine the question why has bureaucracy failed in these countries? 'Bureaucracy and Development in Meghalaya' examines this question with particular reference to the bureaucracy in Meghalaya and India in general. In examining this question bureaucracy is considered not merely a conglomeration of rules and regulations but a part of the greater social system which influences and in turn is being influenced by the social system. In this respect, 'Bureaucracy and Development in Meghalaya' is a departure from conventional studies in the field of Public Administration.

The study highlights the interactional aspect of bureaucracy with its environment as well

as the behavioural pattern of the bureaucrats. It concludes that bureaucracy in India like other third world countries is passing through a transitional phase where it is unable to perform its functions effectively because of a hiatus between its structural-behavioural elements and the new demands that are placed upon it.

The book will interest students and research scholars of Public Administration as well as the administrators themselves. The book is theoretically rich and methodologically sound.

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# BUREAUCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT IN MEGHALAYA

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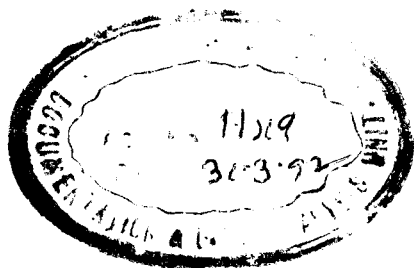


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# Contents

<i>Chapters</i>	<i>Pages</i>
Foreword	vii
Preface	xiii
Acknowledgements	xv
1 Introduction	1
2 Setting and Sample	25
3 Socio-Economic Background	29
4 Organisation	51
<del>5</del> Bureaucrats and Politicians	99
6 Bureaucrats Dysfunctions	119
7 Conclusion	143
Appendices	159
Bibliography	217
Index	
Name Index	235
Subject Index.	237

## Introduction

The developing countries are committed to the twin goals of nation-building and socio-economic development. This commitment to the goals of nation-building and socio-economic development involves a rapid and sustained change both on social and economic fronts. Changes in the developing countries are basic and large-scale and are sought to be brought about within a short period of time. This underlines the immensity of the task that the developing countries are facing. They have to come out of their traditional social and cultural moorings and have to accommodate their traditional values, attitudes and institutions to the demands of social and economic change. They have to widen the people's participation in political process and developmental programmes. They have also to create new opportunities and to enlarge the range of distribution of economic benefits so as to satisfy the people's aspirations for upward mobility. As S.J. Eldersveld, A.P. Barnabas and V. Jagannadham observe, the problem confronting the developing countries "is to accommodate the past with the modern present, to economize resources in the face of mounting and cumulating crises, and to elicit intelligent and meaningful co-operation from a public

## 2 *Bureaucracy and Development in Meghalaya*

thus far ignorant and indifferent in its orientations towards the distant government".<sup>1</sup> All these problems need to be grappled with and solved simultaneously to bring about desired changes for the development of the country.

In this task, the government has to play a crucial role in planning, initiating and executing developmental programmes and activities. It has to function not only as the 'prime energizer' of development efforts but also as an agent of change. In acting as an agent of change what the government needs more is the public co-operation without which a well-conceived plan of development is likely to become ineffective. The public co-operation in the nation building activities depends upon three factors: (1) "the degree of value-congruence between the modernising elites and the mass of citizens; (2) effectiveness of the political sector in problem-solving; and (3) the extent of structural shift in the distribution of political power".<sup>2</sup>

The above mentioned three factors are the conditions necessary for getting support for a political system. But, what are the structures which can effectively mobilise such support? There are two structures for mobilising support, i.e., the "administrative system" and "political leadership."<sup>3</sup> Between the two structures, the bureaucratic structure is more important than the political structure because it has firm roots in developing countries. "While political leadership, party organisation, the electoral system, and elected legislatures all

1. S.J. Eldersveld, A.P. Barnabas, and V. Jagannadhan, *The Citizen and the Administrator in a Developing Democracy: An Empirical Study in Delhi State*, (New-Delhi: The Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1968), p. 2.
2. Shanti Kothari and Ramashray Roy, *Relations between Politicians and Administrators at the District Level* (New-Delhi: Indian Institute of Public Administration and the Centre of Applied Politics, 1969), p.5.
3. *Ibid.*, p.6.

are in a state of flux, bureaucracy continues to provide permanent leadership in the administration of developing societies.”<sup>4</sup> In contrast to the political structures, the bureaucratic structures of government are well institutionalised and show stability and continuity. Consequently, developmental efforts have to rely heavily on bureaucratic structure.

### **Bureaucracy in India**

Before we formulate any specific issue for discussion, it will be worthwhile to provide a historical perspective of administration in India which will help us in understanding the impact of historical forces on the present bureaucratic system.

Bureaucracy, as we understand to-day, did not exist in India before the advent of the British rule. It was the British who laid the foundation of modern bureaucracy in India, a bureaucracy based on rules, well defined authority, integrated hierarchical structure, and merit and open competition. The British period is characterised by unification of the subcontinent and the establishment of a single political rule which became possible through an elaborate and integrated administrative system. Based on the district pattern of the Moghuls, a hierarchical structure of administration was established from the centre downward with the provinces and districts acting as the subordinate agencies.<sup>5</sup> The basic Moghul structure of district administration was retained but was strengthened by converting it into modern bureaucratic organisation.

Initially, the Britishers came to India for trading purpose. But gradually, the company began to acquire territorial

4. C.P. Bhambri, *Administrators in a Changing Society* (First ed., Delhi : National Publishing House, 1972), p.17.
5. Rajni Kothari, *Politics in India*, (New-Delhi : Orient Longman Ltd., 1972), p.38.

#### 4 *Bureaucracy and Development in Meghalaya*

jurisdiction and political power, culminating in the building up of the British Empire in India. At the initial stage of empire-building, the mercantile employees of the company became the administrators and the term 'Civil Service' acquired its present meaning.<sup>6</sup> A youngman was recruited first as an 'Apprentice', the other superior grades were those of 'Writers', 'Factors', 'Junior Merchants', and 'Senior Merchants'. In the beginning, the candidates were selected by the Court of Directors on their request or petition. But by an order of 1731 that "in future all petitions for employment in the Company's service, either at home or abroad, be presented by some gentlemen in the Direction",<sup>7</sup> there emerged the patronage of the Directors and the covenanted civil service virtually became the monopoly of certain families. To a considerable extent, recruitment to the Civil Service under East India Company was made from the governing classes and wealthy professional classes at home. They were paid poorly but they augmented their income by private initiative such as private dealings, maintenance of monopoly of control of new products, and collection of grafts on taxes and receipt of gifts.<sup>8</sup>

But as the company grew and its responsibility increased, interest of the Civil Servants ran counter to the interest of the company. In some cases, exaction on the local population led to war as well as serious financial deficit for the company. As a result of this, attempts were made to place limits on the rapacity of the Company's servants, so that by serving the company well they would also serve themselves. This was done by the Regulating Act of 1773 which made a distinction between the Civil and the Commercial functions of the

6. Biswanath Prasad, *The Indian Administrative Service*, (New Delhi : S.Chand & Co., 1968), p.11.

7. Quoted by Biswanath Prasad, *Ibid.*

8. P.L. Bansal, *Administrative Development in India*, (New Delhi : Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1974), p.2.

company and abolished the right of private trading and acceptance of gifts by those personnel who were engaged in the civil administration of the company.<sup>9</sup> In 1776, salaries were raised for the first time and it was argued that mere legislation could not remove corruption unless the officials were placed above temptation which was possible only through payment of good salaries.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, Lord Wellesley's accession to the office of the Governor-General marked the beginning of a new phase in India. His arrival ushered in the dawn of imperialism in all its dimensions. Administratively, it gave rise to the need for a strong and trained bureaucracy, an executive administration based on a combination of powers. Thus, for the purpose of making an institutional arrangement for the regular training and education of the Civil Servants, the Fort William College was established in Calcutta in 1800, which was later on replaced by the Haileybury College in England in 1805.<sup>10</sup> Though the opinion is divided as regards the objectives and performance of Haileybury College, its common training programme did help the Civil Servants to be efficient, honest and upright, on the one hand, and make them believe in social exclusivity, on the other. The Civil Servants "became in themselves a social class, class of aristocracy of talent, race and even of colour."<sup>11</sup>

The growth of imperialism and free trade also made it necessary to replace the patronage of the company through public examination. The Act of 1833 proposed the introduction

9. B.B. Misra, *Bureaucracy in India: A Historical Analysis of Development upto 1947*, (First ed., Bombay : Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 46-47.

10. Bansal, *op. cit.*

11- *Ibid.*, p.4.

## 6 *Bureaucracy and Development in Meghalaya*

of limited competition but it did not materialise.<sup>12</sup> The Macaulay Committee which was appointed in 1853 to report on the subject, strongly recommended an examination that was to be on subjects of liberal education rather than on those especially more useful to Indian Civil Servants; no premium was to be held out for knowledge, wide surface and small depth.<sup>13</sup> On the basis of the Macaulay Committee's report, the first examination was held in 1855 and the service came to be known as the Indian Civil Service which represented the best elite from the best families of England.<sup>14</sup>

The Indian Civil Service was a generalist service and the I.C.S. officers could be placed in any job and was considered fit for it. "There was no department—police, forest, opium, salt, education, health—where he could not be posted".<sup>15</sup> The I.C.S. was the sole repository of power in Indian Society.<sup>16</sup> It provided good income, power and high prestige and status. The status of the I.C.S. was evident from the large amount of dowry which they could command on marriage.<sup>17</sup>

The I.C.S. officers occupied superior positions in the administration and were always at the top of the administrative hierarchy. The superior positions of the I.C.S. in administrative hierarchy were jealously guarded by the British, and as

12. Misra, *op.cit.*, p.65.

13. Prasad, *op.cit.*, p.14.

14. N.K. Singhi, *Bureaucracy: Positions and Persons*, (First ed., New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1974), p.16.

15. *Ibid.*, p.19.

16. W.H. Morris-Jones, *The Government and Politics of India*, (Bombay: B.I. Publications, 1974), p. 23.

17. Richard p. Taub, *Bureaucrats under Stress*, (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyaya, 1969), p. 11.

a group, the I.C.S. became exclusive.<sup>18</sup> The main function of the I.C.S. was the maintenance of law and order and the collection of revenue. It was a service eminently suited for governing a colonial empire. The I.C.S. officers did not need to share their authority with any local body or assembly. Their function was to govern from above and they were neither responsible nor responsive to the people. Describing the function of the I.C.S., N.C. Roy observes :

From the very start they (members of the I.C.S.) chose some functions as the essential duties of the government. They concentrated all their efforts upon their performance and they performed them with as much efficiency as their general education, natural ability and special training might allow. They showed their genius in particularly building up the administrative structure which had collapsed in the great anarchy. They had great achievement to their credit in making law and order and in dealing with revenue problems. Beyond these functions they were loath to look. This narrow outlook was engendered in them partly by the fact that in the nineteenth century Britain. Laissez-faire was the principle which had struck root. Secondly, being mostly Britishers, the Civil Servants were interested in the maintenance of British supremacy and not with those other functions which might administer to the welfare of the people but might also have sown seeds of dissolution of the British Empire in India.<sup>19</sup>

### Post-Independence Period

In August, 1947, the British left the country but the administrative system they built up during their colonial period remained intact not only in its form but also in its characteristics.<sup>20</sup> Writing about the inadequacies of Indian

18. C.P. Bhambhri, *Bureaucracy and Politics in India*, (First ed., Delhi: Vikas Publications, 1971), p.59.
19. Quoted by Bansal, *op.cit.*, p.7.
20. Morris-Jones, *op.cit.*, p.25.

bureaucracy, Taylor, Ensminger and their associates point out that "... the inadequacies of Indian bureaucracy are not due to the fact that it is a bureaucracy but, due to a considerable extent, to the fact that it carries too much baggage from the past".<sup>21</sup> In fact, there has not been any significant break with the past. Of course, after independence, it was difficult for the national leaders to bring about a wholesale change in the administrative system, a system which was credited with establishing political unification of the country. The nation after independence, was confronted with many complex problems like those of the integration of the country, communal riots and the influx of a large number of refugees from both the Eastern and Western sectors of Pakistan. The law and order situation at that time was also under threat. The combination of all these factors left very little choice before the national leaders but to continue with the administrative system that was pre-eminently suited for a colonial country.

After independence, the I.A.S. occupied the place of the I.C.S. and provided top administrative personnel to the Central as well as to the State Governments. The recruitment pattern has almost remained the same following Macaulay's principles of liberal education, generalist and not specialised competitive examination, and early age recruitment. The Union Public Service Commission conducts competitive examinations every year for recruitment to Indian Administrative Service, Indian Police Service, Indian Foreign Service and other Central services while the State Public Services Commissions hold competitive examinations for recruitment to the respective State services.

The conditions of eligibility and the courses for I.A.S., etc. examinations are shown in table 1 : 1. Any Indian citizen between the age of twenty-one and twenty-six years

21. Quoted by Kuldeep Mathur, *Bureaucratic Response to Development*, (First ed., Delhi : National Publishing House, 1972), pp. 2-3.

holding a degree from a recognised College or University is eligible for the competitive examination. For the I.P.S., however, the age limit is twenty to twenty-six years. The upper age limit is relaxable by five years in case of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes candidates and eight years in special cases.

The examination (upto 1979) consists of a written test and a viva-voce. Candidates who qualify in the written test are called for interview. Until 1956, candidates who failed to secure a minimum percentage of marks in the interview were not considered eligible to enter the service, regardless of their performance in the written examination. However, at present, each part of the examination is given a numerical value. Candidates performing well in the written examination may compensate for poor performance in the interview.<sup>22</sup> The subjects for written examination include three compulsory papers and two optional papers for I.P.S. and three for the I.A.S. and central services. In addition, the candidates opting for the I.A.S. and I.F.S. are required to offer two advanced papers.

Women, may, however, compete only if they are unmarried. If a women marries subsequent to entering she may be asked to resign, if the maintenance of the efficiency of the service so requires.

However, following the recommendation of the Kothari Commission, the U.P.S.C. introduced certain changes in the scheme of examination since 1979.<sup>23</sup> Now, the commission annually holds an uniform examination called Civil Service Examinations.<sup>24</sup> Any Indian citizen who is a graduate from a

22. Taub, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

23. For details of the new scheme, see table 1: 2.

24. The material regarding the Civil Service Examination is collected from *Employment News* (Special Supplement) of 20th December, 1980.

recognised university and whose age is between twenty-one and twenty-eight years is eligible for the Civil Service Examinations. The upper age limit is relaxable by three to eight years in different cases.

The examination comprises two successive stages : Civil Service preliminary Examination (Objective Type) for the selection of candidates for the main examination ; and the Civil Service Main Examination (written and interview) for the selection of candidates for the various services and posts. The Preliminary Examination consists of two papers of objective type (multiple-choice questions) and carries a maximum of 450 marks. This examination is meant to serve as a screening test only, the marks obtained in the Preliminary Examination by the candidates who are declared qualified for admission to the Main Examination are not counted for determining their final order of merit. The number of candidates to the Main Examination are about ten times total approximate number of vacancies to be filled in the year in the various services and posts.

The Main Examination consists of a written examination and an interview test. The written examination consists of eight papers of conventional essay type each carrying 300 marks. However, the papers on Indian Languages and English are of qualifying nature and the marks obtained in these papers are not counted for ranking. Candidates who obtain such minimum qualifying marks as fixed by the Commission are summoned for an interview for a Personality Test. The number of candidates called for interview are generally twice the number of vacancies to be filled in. The interview carries 250 marks with no minimum qualifying marks.

Marks obtained by the candidates in the Main Examination (written part as well as interview) determines their final ranking. Candidates are allocated to various services on the basis of their ranks in the examination and the preferences expressed by them for different services.

Although passing the examination is the primary route to enter the I.A.S., there are two other ways in which members can be recruited into the service. The first is the emergency or special recruitment while the second alternative route is by promotion from the state civil services.

After the final selection the candidates are imparted training at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration at Mussoorie. There is difference in training programme of I.A.S. and other services, common emphasis being laid on imparting training to equip officers for undertaking programmes of socio-economic development. The training period for an entrant to the I.A.S. both at Mussoorie and in the district spans about twenty-eight months before he is placed in an independent position.<sup>25</sup>

There is no central cadre of the I.A.S. and the new recruits confirmed in the service are permanently placed by the central government in a particular state cadre. The I.A.S. officers come on deputation to the centre. However, the I.A.S. officers are governed by the rules framed by the central government.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, we find that there is a continuity of British administrative tradition in the new setting after independence. The India Administrative Service constituted on the model of I.C.S. has maintained its elitist character.<sup>27</sup> Even the recent changes introduced by the U.P.S.C. in the system of recruitment maintain the generalist liberal orientation of the recruits.

## New Tasks

After independence, the total environment and ethos of the country underwent a qualitative change and the bureau-

25. Singhi, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Bhambhri "Administrators in a Changing Society", *op. cit.*, p. 24.

cracy which has its genesis in the colonial period has now to function in a new context, a context which is fundamentally different from that of the British regime. The first is the changed political context. Democratic elections, political parties, competitive politics, and parliamentary government provided a radically new dimension. The bureaucrats have now to function in a representative and democratic set-up where he is not only responsible to the higher ups in his cadre but also to the elected representatives of the peoples. The democratic institutions like the cabinets, legislatures, political parties and pressure groups provide the framework of purposes, goals and resources within which the bureaucracy has now to operate. "It has to be sensitive to the policies laid down by the Cabinets and Legislatures, the values and purposes of the leadership, and the interests and pressures of political parties and socio-economic groups".<sup>28</sup> Secondly, the ideal of welfare state has been accepted under the Constitution. The government has also emphasized its commitment to the goal of socialism. The goals of nation-building and modernisation have been given first priority by the planners and policy-makers. The execution of all these programmes and activities are dependent upon the effective functioning of administrative machinery. Thirdly, the administrators are no more the rulers. They are the servants of the people. They are required to give up their authoritarian attitude and be dedicated to the service of the people. They are not to serve the people from above. To develop a society which is largely backward and traditional, the administrators have to go to the villages not only to collect revenue and taxes but also to educate the people, to help them in improving agricultural yields, to conduct election, to build roads and bridges and to help the sick and ailing persons. In other words, they have now to carry on administration with participation and co-operation of the people. Emphasising the new context, role and responsibilities of the administrators in independent India, late Shri G.B. Pant pointed out :

28. C.N. Bhalerao, "Bureaucracy as an Institution of Modernisation : Some Issues", *Administrative Change in India* (ed.) Ramesh K. Aurora (Jaipur : Aalekh Publishers, n. d.), p. 62.

“To serve the villagers, you have to identify yourself with rural life ; to find joy in the air you breathe and consciousness [*sic*] of the fact that you are engaged in the act of building of a new society. You have to train people in the art of life and in the art of living. You have to see that they move, they move onward and they are not pushed onward artificially. Let them learn the art which will enable them to secure for themselves what you want them to possess. Unless you try to influence without imposing something from above, your success will be short-lived”.<sup>29</sup>

Finally, with the establishment of democracy after independence, the Indian masses began to be politicised and conscious of their own rights. As a result of government initiative and programmes, the social structure and values also gradually began to undergo changes. The universal adult franchise and agro-industrial development has changed the basic Indian Philosophy, a philosophy under which the people were expected only to obey the government.<sup>30</sup> The concept of ‘Ma-baap Sarkar’ is no more in existence. The bureaucracy has now come to function among the people who are conscious of their right and who not only obey but also make demands upon the administration. The new administrative system of India emphasizes “a public not parasitic in its relationship to the administrative system, but participant, a public which accepted duties as well as made demands, a public confident in administrative hierarchy and motivated to share in the responsibilities of development”.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, under the new set-up, the area of bureaucratic functioning has enlarged both quantitatively and qualitatively. Its function is no longer limited to the maintenance of law and order ; it has now to undertake vast and complex tasks

29. Quoted by Mathur, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

30. Bhambhri, “Administrators in a Changing Society”, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

31. S.J. Eldersveld, V. Jagannadham and A.P. Barnabas, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-8.

of nation-building and socio-economic development. But what role does the bureaucracy actually play in this task of nation-building and socio-economic development? If newspaper accounts, the criticisms voiced in the Parliament, State Legislatures and the public, the findings of research scholars and the criticisms of the Administrative Reforms Commission and similar Commissions in the States are any indication of bureaucratic performance, a gloomy picture appears as an answer to this question. Almost everyday, there are criticisms that the bureaucracy has failed in its task of nation-building and development. Not only has the Indian bureaucracy failed as an instrument of social change, it is also resistant to change within itself. Over the years, there has been an increase in corruption and inefficiency in the bureaucracy; its independence, integrity and devotion to public interest have also been undermined. It is now widely recognised that such a bureaucracy is ill-equipped for the massive and complex tasks of nation-building and socio-economic development.

But why has the bureaucracy failed in its task of nation-building and socio-economic development? In the present study, we propose to examine this question with particular reference to the higher bureaucracy in Meghalaya. The reason for restricting the scope of our enquiry to the higher echelon of bureaucracy is that, being the managerial-group in the bureaucracy, it is more likely to have a direct bearing on economic, political and other kinds of national development. It is the higher bureaucrate who are called upon to provide policy counsel, to assist in the formulation of programmes, and to engage in the management and direction of administration for translating policy-goals into realities.

The hypothesis, which is the subject of the present enquiry, is that the bureaucracy is unable to perform its role effectively in the task of nation-building and development because of the divergence between its structural-behavioural elements and the new demands placed upon it. With its old and worn-out structure, the bureaucracy is called upon to provide leadership in the stupendous task of nation-building and development.

This divergence is one of the most important sources of strain upon the bureaucracy and leads to a number of problems which need critical examination.

Guided by the above hypothesis, an attempt is made in this study to identify some of the problems the higher bureaucracy faces in Meghalaya in the performance of its role as an instrument of development. The present study has been divided into seven chapters. Chapter one gives an outline of the present study while chapter two describes the setting and sample of the study. Chapter three deals with the socio-economic background of the bureaucrats, and chapter four, with the structural framework in which they work. In chapter five, we deal with the strains resulting from democratisation and in chapter six, we analyse bureaucratic dysfunctions. Finally, chapter seven sums up the study dovetailing the preceding discussion along with a study of the value commitment of the bureaucrats.