CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION
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It is a well accepted principle that in any democratic government, the bureaucracy has an important role to play for successful implementation of policies laid down by the government in power.

In other words bureaucracy concentrates on the machinery for the implementation of public policies as given rather than on making them. Although policy making and policy implementation are two distinct functions of government, they are closely interrelated. Policy is laid down by the legislature or political authorities who are vested with the power of giving policy the legal authority. The legislature lays down policy in general terms which is usually expressed in the form of acts and laws. In order to give a more precise expression to these acts and laws, the bureaucratic arm of government plays an important role in policy making also. Even in recent years, the role of bureaucratic arm of government in policy making has grown in importance. Therefore, it seems strange that policy making as well as policy implementing have come into the hands of the bureaucrats.

Under the Indian Constitution the top level bureaucrats have a constitutional responsibility to advice on policy option. The secretaries to the Government of India, for example, take or advise ministers to take, decision that arise within the framework of existing laws or policy which otherwise cannot be dealt with by routine procedures. Such decisions clarify the scope of a policy and finalise its application in new and special situations. Further, they are extensively involved in preparing explanatory material for ministerial use about the operation of existing policies. They also advice on the financial and administrative implications of different policy alternatives. Thus, the top level bureaucrats, particularly secretaries to the Government of India and state governments, play more than an advisory role in the public policy formulation process.
However, in a developing country, the role of the bureaucracy becomes more prominent, because very often bureaucrats have also to perform the role of a change agent. The Indian bureaucratic system is unique in many respects because apart the role it is expected to play in the democratic polity that is India, the bureaucrats perform roles at various levels-in the districts, in state governments and in the Government of India. The Indian bureaucratic system is one of the few organised system anywhere in the world where officers move from state government to the central government and back, and apart from that, at times perform roles in public sector undertakings. This bureaucracy, which is a successor to the old Indian bureaucratic system, has moved from the law and order and revenue collection functions to activities which would have been unthinkable in 1947, when India attained Independence. The role of Indian bureaucracy has in fact changed dramatically during the last two or three decades and it is now poised for another big change because of the economic liberalization programmes and people’s empowerment programmes through democratic decentralization (PRLs) now under way in India.

One of the consequences of economic liberalization in India, has been delicensing and deregulation. Many of the controls, which were in existence pertaining to industrial licensing, location clearances, etc. have been done away with. Consequently, the role of the Ministry of Industry in the Government of India has been drastically curtailed. The office of Director General, Technical Development has been wound up. Centralized purchases through Directorate General of supplies and Disposals have been discontinued. In the capital market segment, office of the controller of Capital Issues has been abolished. The important side effect of these measures has been that the role performed by bureaucracy, has been whittled down making it unnecessary for industrialists and businessmen to approach bureaucracy for necessary permission or licenses. Inevitably, some of the middle level and senior bureaucrats, who have a “taste of power” in the regime of control and Licensing, may not take kindly to this apparent “loss of power”. This is nothing unique, because similar symptoms have been noticed all over the world wherever the government has changed their track
drastically, curtailing the role of government to a substantial degree in industry and finance.

It however, need to be noted that delicensing or deregulation dose not mean absence of regulation in any manner. On the contrary, it is in an economic system where full freedom is made available to an entrepreneur that regulations have to be formally in place and regulators put in position for objective and impartial enforcement. It is, however, not always easy to change the bureaucracy from the role of a license giver in a controlled regime to the role of a regulator in a liberalised set-up. As the premier bureaucracy in India, shifting the role of bureaucrats from a controller to a regulator is one of the important tasks which will have to be faced by bureaucratic system in India in the coming years.

An important segment of economic liberalization in public sector reforms now a days is that public sector managers do not have the kind of freedom necessary to enforce the doctrine of accountability in the public sector. The political as well as bureaucratic leadership will have to consciously exercise self-restraint and shed some of their power and control vis-a-vis public sector undertakings, if these undertakings are to have autonomy both in letter and in spirit. There is also the painful decision to be taken to close down totally unviable public sector undertakings, which politically speaking, is not an easy decision to take. At the same time, the drain on the public exchequer, because of the sustained loss-making undertakings cannot be allowed to continue year after year, if the fiscal deficit of the government is to be kept under reasonable control.

Over the years bureaucrats have faced several challenges. In the early part of independent India, it was law and order, refugee relief and rehabilitation, food scarcity, etc. From a purely law and order and revenue collection mind-set, bureaucrats got transformed into the mindset of a development administrator. In the 60’s for example, bureaucrats well called to play an important role in food management, public distribution network, scarcity relief work, etc. Along with development orientation towards rural development, extension network in the agricultural sector, family planning, etc. It is to the credit of this premier...
bureaucratic system, that the transformation was effected without much pain or dislocation. This was partly due to the high quality of the bureaucracy and the support it enjoyed at the top level. Partly it was also due to the enlightened political leadership, which saw the effectiveness of bureaucracy, particularly in development administration. The transformation which is now underway in the 90's may not be that easy to achieve, because the social environment is more difficult and the tasks ahead more complex. Nowhere is this more acute than in the case of district administration.

Historically, district administration has played an important role in the public administration set-up in India. The pinnacle of district administration was reached during the British rule in India when the Collector and District Magistrate heading the district administration became a very important functionary for the colonial rule. Apart from maintaining law and order and collecting revenue he became the principal coordinator for all government activities in his district. For the common man he was literally the government and consequently, he was the court of last resort in the bureaucratic set-up in the district. After India attained Independence in 1947, and the mantle of the India bureaucracy in the district set-up, initially continued to enjoy the same power and privilege as was conferred on district collectors during the colonial rule. Slowly, however, the perception started to change because in a democratic government where elected representatives like MLAs and Members of Parliament have their own role to play for articulating the interests of the general public, it was no longer possible to confer unfettered power or privileges on a district official. Initially, however, there was a tendency in many states to use the institution of state level bureaucracy for pushing through development activities pertaining to agriculture, rural development, etc. The underlying idea was that with the power and prestige attached to his office, it would be possible for the district level bureaucracy to coordinate and push through development activities in his district in the manner desired by the government in power. While many district level bureaucrats did rise to the occasion and could successfully carry out the functions of revenue collection and law and order on one side and developmental activities on the other, it soon became apparent that this
was throwing an intolerable burden on the institution of district level bureaucrats and there were inherent limitations on the role which could be performed by a district level bureaucrat as a change agent. In fact, the pressure on the district level bureaucrat today is many times more than it was in the colonial days. Gone are the days when a district level bureaucrat could ride from village to village, camp with his entourage whenever fancy took him, and spend days on end getting to know the villagers, their customs, rituals etc and also their problems. At the same time, he has to ensure that all the central and state sponsored schemes are implemented well in his district, regularly monitored and reports are dispatched to various quarters as desired by some organizations and departments. All these tasks hardly leave the district level bureaucracy with any time or scope for an in depth study of local problems so as to devise any long-term developmental strategy for his district. It would also be just to state that revenue collection, because of which he got his title, is far from the mind of a district level bureaucrat in the above situation.

The above realization resulted in the idea that it is better to separate some developmental functions from the functions of a district level bureaucrat and entrust or empower these to a separate agency altogether. And it is also realized that the success of any developmental programme largely depends in the active participation of the people. It was in this context that democratic decentralization, as a concept, took root in the countryside of India. Rajasthan was the first state which introduced a democratically decentralized set-up with panchayat on one tier, Panchayat Samiti in the middle tire and Zilla Parishad at the district level as the top layer. The Basic intention was that these should be elected by the general public through a democratic process, and the President of the Zilla Parishad as well as the chairperson of a Panchayat Samiti should supervise the functions of these bodies assisted by a local bureaucracy. The functions to be entrusted to Zilla Parishad as well as Panchayat Samiti were also spelt out clearly through a separate legislation. This experiment was picked up subsequently in the states of Maharashtra and Gujrat which also introduced a more or less three tier system of democratic decentralization. However, a refinement in these two states was that
the chief executive officer in the Zilla Parishad set-up was made to be district level bureaucrat on deputation, to work under the general superintendence and control of Zilla Parishad. These state consequently came to have two senior bureaucrats in the district hierarchy one functioning as a collector and the other functioning as chief executive officer of the Zilla Parishad. The functions allotted to these officials were clearly demarcated so that there was no conflict as to their "turf”. The fact that in these two states, this pattern continues to exist even today shows that this arrangement has stood the test of time and has proved to be a satisfactory working arrangement in the district administration of these two states. Recently, by the 73rd and 74th amendments in the constitution, the central government enacted a model legislation providing for a three-tire set-up and indicating clearly the manner of elections to these democratically elected bodies. While it is open to state government to adopt this model with suitable modifications suited to their situation, it is clear now that as a policy framework, the intention is to have a democratically elected decentralized set-up in the district administration with clearly demarcated powers and functions. Consequently, this is a step in the right direction because considering the continental size of the country, a democratic decentralized set-up, as an important segment of district administration, appears to be a desirable institutional arrangement.

In a democratic set-up politicians set goals and broad strategic directions, but sound institutional arrangements can determine whether the vision of political leaders get translated into effective policy priorities or not. The rules and norms embedded in the policy making process should be so designed that it curbs the political pressures that can lead to poor decision making and bad out comes. Evidence across a range of countries has shown that well functioning bureaucracies can promote growth and reduce poverty. They can provide sound policy inputs and deliver critical public good and services at least cost.

There can be no government without the bureaucracy. This is every where. Therefore, however much it is to wish to the contrary, this institution cannot be
done away with. As long as there is a government and the state, the bureaucracy is expected to be one of the indispensable organs of modern democracies.

Popular participation is the cornerstone of democracy. People's participation in development means playing a significant role in the developmental decision-making process. Effective grassroots democracy as well as decentralized development depend a great deal on people's involvement or cooperation. One of the important objectives of people's participation is empowerment of the people in local, rural and urban governmental agencies. This is the reason why empowerment is seen as a means for strengthening democratic ideals and attaining developmental goals. This being the case, what are the means of achieving or channeling participation?

The means lie in decentralization. There is a whole debate in social sciences about it. It is as old as the discussion on good governance, good administration, federalism, and democracy in political science, the main debate in sociology on pluralism and voluntarism; and in economics, on the consumer's interests and different modes of production.

Decentralization in the context of India takes the form of Panchayati Raj Institutions and other similar institutions at the rural level. Panchayati Raj is the Indian model of rural local self-government. The subject of decentralization is the most vital in the Third World today. In the 1950s and 1960s, when Central Planning was being implemented, people became disappointed and disillusioned with its process and procedure. This system is the antithesis of decentralization.

There has been a shift in thinking from centralization to decentralization of planning and development in all Third World countries, including India. Central planning under the auspices of the Five-Year Plans has so far failed to achieve the objectives and goals of planned development in our country. Thus like other Third world nations, the political leadership, planners and policy-makers in India have begun to seriously raise questions about how best to decentralize the planning
process. It is in this context that the interface between the bureaucracy and the elected representatives should be discussed.

Coming specifically to the Indian scenario, soon after independence two fundamental changes were sought to be introduced through the constitution. First, the adoption of parliamentary democracy within the framework of a federal polity. Second, a need was felt for attitudinal, structural and behavioural changes in the bureaucracy at all levels. In particular, emphasis was placed on skills to deal with the citizens and representatives, and the development of institutions of parliamentary democracy in the civil service. The bureaucracy being responsible for the implementation of development plans and programmes, it had to acquire the dynamics of development administrations its techniques, strategies, methods and so on.

These changes were expected to take place immediately after independence, following the adoption of the constitution. According to the political leadership of the country, this did not call for a major transformation in the structure of the bureaucracy that India inherited from the British colonial regime. India's political leadership did not think it necessary to replace the old administrative structure by either a party bureaucracy or a new system of administration. But the system gave ample scope for administrative reforms.

However, concrete steps in this direction were taken only in 1966 when the Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) was set-up. It brought out more than two dozen reports on various aspects, facets and dimensions of public administration in India including planning and decentralization.

What is being emphasized here is that the working of the constitution in the last fifty five years has not come up to the people's expectations. Power remains concentrated in the hands of the legislature or the members of the cabinet and has not devolved to the people. People exercise their franchise once in five years which does not seem adequate for a developing democracy like India.
India should aim to develop into a participatory democracy even within the framework of parliamentary democracy. This can be achieved through Panchayati Raj. That is, democracy which has been established by the constitution at the federal and the state levels has to percolate down to the grassroots level both in urban and rural areas, in the true spirit of the 73rd and 74th Amendments. Together they will establish grassroots democracy. Decentralization will give power to the people who are the real sovereigns. People have to play an active role because India is a developing country and development is the life breath of the nation. People either develop or die, progress or perish. People ought to become both the objects and subjects of development. And people include both men and women.

India has been engaged in the process of planned socio-economic development and nation-building within the framework of a democratic polity and federalism for the last fifty years. However, it is only now that the country has moved towards, with some degree of success, decentralization of political power in theory through the establishment of Panchayati Raj Institutions. But functionally they have left a lot to be derived. What went wrong? Absence of elections, prolonged super session of the elected Panchayati Raj Institutions, and inadequate representation of weaker sections.

So far the bureaucracy has concentrated all the powers in its hands for initiating, formulating and evaluating development plans, programmes and projects in all the states under the command system of planning. Every plan mentions the need for decentralization to facilitate people’s participation in development, but it only amounts to lip service. It is for the first time that the 73rd and 74th Amendments have at least given hope that people’s participation in development will become a reality.

The bureaucracy has to learn to share power with the elected representatives at the respected levels and be accountable to them for their acts of omission and commission. Decentralized development calls for multi-level planning. There must be planning at the state, district, block and village levels on the one hand, and at the nagarpalika, municipal, metropolitan and town levels on the other. All these
types of planning are called for so that people at each level can, in a decentralized manner, prepare the development plans and projects, implement them with the help of the concerned bureaucracy, and also evaluate and monitor the progress of implementation. This is real empowerment and true decentralized development.

It can be concluded from the above discussion, that bureaucracy has not fulfilled all the expectations of the people. And it will also be improper to say that bureaucracy doesn't want to empower people at grass root level, and benefit people from the New Economic Policy. It is a fact that, policies and programmes are prepared by secretaries (senior bureaucrats) of related ministries, then how, without bureaucratic will New Economic Policy and Democratic Decentralization Policies or any people oriented policies have been drafted or prepared? But there is no doubt that both the policies of the government of India i.e. New Economic Policy and People’s Empowerment through Democratic Decentralization (PRIs), could not get satisfactory result, but for this failure only bureaucracy is not responsible. There are so many factors behind this:

a) POLITICIANS

It is to be noticed that in the functioning of bureaucracy, there is a lot of political interference in day-to-day administration, which ultimately affects the administrative functioning and sometime even demoralizes the administrators.

Political neutrality is the hallmark of our bureaucracy. A bureaucrat is precluded from indulging in activity of political nature. He is under an obligation to serve which ever political party is in power and tender advice to political masters without any fear or favour.

However, after the Nehruvian era the politico-administrative scenario began to change for the worse. The bureaucrats increasingly became pliant tools in the hands of their political masters. Bureaucracy is being forced to be influenced by political parties through various means like promotion and prized postings to favourites and punishment postings to those who failed to fall inline.
This deterioration has become more pronounced in some states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Gujrat. The entire bureaucratic structure has undergone a sea-change and the politics of caste and religion has taken over. Postings and promotions in important districts are made according to the castes of the officers.

In recent times in Gujrat some bureaucrats resigned due to political pressure to isolate themselves to stop communal violence.

More or less it is generally accepted that so many politicians from top to bottom have criminal backgrounds.

Thus the entry of criminals into politics and the linkages of criminals with some bureaucrats and other political leaders from top to grass roots level have crippled the fabric of all democratic institutions in India. Therefore bureaucrats are being forced to work according to their (politicians) ideology and will.

There are so many incidents that people’s representatives assaulted the officials and even beaten them.

Specially at the grassroots level, so many people’s representatives are totally uncultured, uncivilized and illiterate.

Unfortunately, there is no political party ready to accept totally criminal free electoral process. In recent times, Supreme Court issued a directive to Election Commission to assure a free and fair electoral process and criminal free political system. But in all party meeting, there is no single party, ready to accept the directives of the Supreme Court and election commission. All these drawbacks ultimately affects the administrative functioning and even demoralize the bureaucrats.

b) STATE GOVERNMENT

The constitution enjoins on the state to make appropriate provisions in the law on panchayats, developing powers and functions on them in such a way as to enable them to function as “institutions of self-government”. It is difficult to say what will constitute an optimum or even minimum package of powers and
functions for local self-governments throughout the country. However it is clear that, the state governments are not serious to devolve appropriate power and functions to panchayats. There are no regular panchayat elections in so many states. After a gap of 15 years, and after the intervention of Patna High Court, Panchayat election was held in Bihar last year.

c) LACK OF FUNDS

Panchayats are always suffering from lack of funds. There is no system of proper funding to Panchayats in so many states.

d) GENDER INEQUALITY

It is a great obstacle in the path of socio-economic development and people’s empowerment through decentralized democracy (PRIs). Women’s poor economic and social status is a major hindrance in contesting elections. People’s disinterest’s in participation, illiteracy, lack of information, lack of expertise etc. are also the great hindrance in the path of people’s empowerment and socio-economic development.

During the past few years, especially after the introduction of the New Economic Policy and Democratic Decentralization Programme (PRIs) in India both the Central and state Governments have initiated programmes in bureaucratic reforms, as a strategy towards achieving developmental goals. This is also due to the realization and recognition that there is an urgent need for bureaucratic reforms to increase the capabilities of the bureaucratic systems in carrying out goals for economic and social development. It has also been observed that the deficiencies in the bureaucratic machinery constitute some obstacle in the effective implementation of development plans. In the given context, the concept of bureaucratic reforms includes both the structural and behavioural changes or institutional and attitudinal changes. Changes in the bureaucratic apparatus generally rests on the assumption that there is always a better alternative to the status quo.
Therefore, in the process of implementing deliberate and planned social actions, the established bureaucratic system is transformed to achieve maximum efficiency and organizational effectiveness and responsiveness in the delivery of services to the people. The efforts are aimed at increasing the capability of the bureaucratic system for accelerating the attainment of development goals.

The weakest point in the reform cycle is not diagnosis or formulation but implementation. The follow up of reforms is of immense value in the scheme of reforming efforts, if the reforms are not remain a paper exercise. In the following pages, we will be discussing some of the areas where reforms are urgently needed to make the whole system much more accountable and citizen friendly.

a) **TRANSPARENCY AND RESPONSIVENESS**

The citizen’s perception of the state and its functionaries is primarily based on its role as a service provider, law enforcer and regulator. Improving the quality of bureaucracy and providing a responsive interface between the citizens and the bureaucracy requires a number of initiatives. Perhaps the most important is the introduction of greater transparency in the functioning of bureaucratic departments and public bodies.

For bureaucracy to be more effective, they must have the trust and confidence of the people they are meant to serve. Bureaucratic institutions must operate free of bias and establish a fair, predictable set of rules around which people can organize economic and social enterprise.

b) **OPEN GOVERNMENT AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

Information is power. In a democratic system of governance, people are expected to participate in the process of governance. For effective people’s participation, access to information is a condition. Access to information is one of the ways to make democratic scrutiny of the process of functioning of the bureaucracy and thereby check possibilities of corruption, abuse, and misuse of power and exercise of power on irrelevant considerations.
c) PUBLIC GRIEVANCES

The increase in public grievances is a cause of worry. Public grievance primarily arise out of the inaccessibility of bureaucrats, failure to even acknowledge applications, non-enforcement of any kind of time limits, insensitivity and unsympathetic attitude of bureaucrats at various levels.

So there is a need to create a effective and responsive machinery to see public grievances.

d) NEED TO STRENGTHEN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

People around the world are demanding greater influence in the decisions of their government. People’s empowerment through decentralization itself is neither good nor bad. It is a means to an end, often imposed by political reality. Successful decentralization improves the efficiency and responsiveness of the public sector while accommodating potentially explosive political forces.

e) DEPOLITICISATION AND NEED TO PRESERVE BUREAUCRATIC NEUTRALITY

It is a fact that political pressures will continue to be exerted on the bureaucracy given the present state of Indian politics. However, it is upto the bureaucracy to withstand these pressures and evolves its own code of ethics. The bureaucracy must at all cost uphold the rule of law and the guiding philosophy of the constitution.

Further, victimization of bureaucracy in terms of mass transfers and punishment posting must be strongly discouraged and suitable institutional mechanism to regulate the same be evolved.

f) POLITICAL REFORMS

It is really important that all the political parties should come to a decision that the Lok Pal institution should be immediately passed. And the Prime Minister should be included within the jurisdiction of Lok Pal. The election Commission
should tighten the rules persons in such a way that the persons having criminal or any doubtful background are not able to contest in the election. The entry of criminals and illiterates into politics must be stopped, the day bureaucrats and politicians realise that they are people’s representatives only, and there develops a feeling of respect between politicians and bureaucrats, the major problems will be solved.

Apart from the above discussions, it can be said that, bureaucrats play a crucial role in plan implementation. Perhaps it is the bureaucracy on which the success of implementation depends. In principle individual ministries and regional administrators have the responsibility for executing their own plans. But the bureaucrats in the ministries and departments implement the strategies and goals outlined in the plan. And with out people’s participation, no development plan can become a success. So that people at each level can, in a decentralized manner prepare the development plans and projects, implement them with the help of the concerned bureaucracy, and also evaluate and monitor the progress of implementation. This is real empowerment and true decentralized development.