



## ETHICS AND VALUES IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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### **Abstract**

*This article examines the meaning of the term Ethics and values. Role of ethics and values in Public Administration. Ethical behaviour in the public service is considered as a blend of moral qualities and mental attitudes. The requisite moral qualities include not only to the willingness to serve the public but also the willingness to behave competently, efficiently, honestly, fairly and accountability. This paper examines what are the ethical behaviour expected of civil servants. This paper also analysis the attempts made in India through administrative reforms, peoples RTI, Citizens Charters by government, Lokpal and Lokayukta, to make civil service a responsive, people centric and accountable.*

### **1. Introduction**

An important dimension of ethics in public administration is work ethics. It represents a commitment to the fulfillment of one's official responsibilities with a spirit of dedication, involvement and sincerity. It also implies that a government functionary would love his work and not treat it as a burden or a load. And that efficiency, productivity and punctuality will be, the hallmarks of his administrative behaviour.

### **2. Meaning of the Term Ethics and Values**

Ethics is a system of accepted beliefs, mores and values which control human behaviour. More specifically, it is a system based on morals. The latin, origin of the word 'ethics' is ethics that means character. The Oxford English dictionary defines ethics as the science of morals and moral principle. Ethics is something related to a state of mind, a way of looking at thing which may develop into a pattern of behaviours or way of life and social conduct. Ethical behavior in the public service is considered as a blend of moral qualities and mental attitudes. O Glen Stahl rightly observed "the problem of ethical conductor public officials arises by virtue of the power and influence that he commands and the commitment that he undertakes of loyal and disinterested service to the public".

S.L. Goel while elaborating and emphasizing the significance of ethics in public service hold that enactment of laws, rules and regulations cannot ensure administrative efficiency unless and until there is a spirit of devotion and dedication among the public services in their day to day working. Values of public officials is universally recognized to be one of the important factors conducive to efficiency in administration. To sustain high standard of values among all ranks of public personnel over a period of time, however, is not an easy task in any country at any time. Values the selection or evaluation of actions, politics, peoples and events Rokeach and Kernaghan defines values as those 'enduring beliefs that influence the choices we make among available means or ends'.

Civil servants have special obligations to the community because of three reasons. First, they are responsible for managing resources entrusted to them by the community second, they provide and deliver services to the community. Third, they take important decision that affects all aspects of the community life. The community has a right to expect that its civil service functions fairly, impartially and efficiently.

### **3. Expectations from Civil Servants**

Ethics in the civil service is different from those in the other segments in the society because of the particular expectations that the government and the community have about the way the civil servant work on their behalf. These expectations are :-

- a. Impartiality
- b. Efficiency and Effectiveness
- c. Procedural Fairness
- d. Avoidance of Conflict of Interest
- e. Accountability
- f. Responsiveness
- g. Avoidance of Discrimination and Harassment

The discipline expected of a government servant is enshrined in the conduct rules. Therefore, any disciplinary action has to be in consequence of a violation of the conduct Rules. It is therefore, only logical that any omission or commission by a government servant is looked at in the light of the conduct Rules, before any disciplinary action is contemplated in terms of the Disciplinary Rules.



Concerned about the status of standards in public life in Britain, the Prime Ministers announced settings up of a committee on standards in public in the House of Commons on October 25, 1994. The committee was headed by Lord Nolon. The committee recommended the following seven principles of public life required to ensure the highest standard of propriety:

1. Selflessness.
2. Integrity.
3. Objectivity
4. Accountability
5. Openness
6. Honesty
7. Leadership

The American society for public administration (ASPA) adopted in 1984 a code of Ethics for its members (comprising intellectuals as well as practicing administrators). It was revised in 1994. Certain salient points of the ASPA's code of Ethics are as follows: -

- Exercise discretionary authority to promote public interest.
- Recognise and support the public's right to know the public business.
- Exercise compassion, benevolence, fairness and optimism.
- Prevent all forms of mismanagement of public funds by establishing and maintaining strong fiscal and managements controls, by supporting audits and investigative activities.
- Protest constitutional principles of equality, fairness, representativeness, responsiveness and due process in protecting citizen rights.
- Maintain truthfulness and honesty and to not compromise them for advancement, honour, or personal gain.
- Zealously guard against conflict of interest or its appearance, eg : nepotism, improper outside employment, misuse of public resources or acceptance of gifts.

#### **4. Initiatives in India**

##### **Conduct Rules in India**

Conduct rules for public services generally relate to

- a. Maintenance of good behavior towards superiors and citizens.
- b. Protection of integrity and impartiality of the officials.
- c. Observance of certain code of ethics in the private life of the official.
- d. Regulation of political activities of officials.

Some of the important conduct rules are as follows:

1. Every members of the service shall maintain integrity and devotion to duty.
2. No members of the service shall, except with the previous sanction of the Government, permit his son, daughter or dependent to accept employment with firms with which he has official dealings, or with other firms having official dealings with government.
3. No members of the service shall expect with the previous sanction of the Government permit his son, daughter or dependent members of the family to accept from any person gift or use of or accept contributions to, or otherwise associate himself with the raising of any in pursuance of any object whatsoever.
4. No members of the service shall, except with the previous sanction of the Government, engage directly or indirectly in any trade or business or undertake any employment. No members of the service shall speculate in any investment. No members of the service shall make or permit his wife to make any investment likely to embarrass, or influence him in the discharge of his official duties. No member of the service shall, except with the previous knowledge of the Government, acquire or dispose of any immovable property by lease, mortgage, purchase, sale, gift or otherwise either in his own name or in the name of any members of the family. A member of the service who enters into any transactions concerning any movable property exceeding one thousand rupees in value, whether by way of purchase, sale or otherwise shall forthwith report such transaction to the Government. Every member of the service and thereafter at the interval of every twelve months shall submit a return to the Government of all immovable and movable property held by him.

##### **Neutrality in Politics**

Public servants should serve the government and not a particular party. The fortunes of civil services should not be connected with the rise and fall of politics parties. Following are some of the rules pertaining to political neutrality:



1. No members of the service shall be a member of or otherwise associated with any political party or any organization which takes part in politics nor shall be take part in, subscribe in aid of, or assist in any other manner, any political movement or activity.
2. No member of the service shall canvass or otherwise interfere or use his influence in connection with, or take part in, an election to any legislature or local authority.
3. No member of the service shall, in any radio broadcast or in any document published anonymously or in his own person name, or in the name of any other person or in any communication to the press, or in any public utterance, make any statement of fact or opinion which has the effect of an diverse criticism of any current or recent policy or action of the Central Government or a State Government or which is capable of embarrassing the relations between the Central Government and the Government of any foreign state.
4. No Government servant shall, expect in accordance with any general or special order of the Government or in performance in good faith of the duties assigned to them, communicate directly or indirectly any official document or information to any Government servant or any other person to whom he is not authorized to communicate such document or information.

In 1964 some more rules were added which are as follows;

- a. Every government servant holding superiorly post shall take all possible steps to ensure the integrity and devotion of duly of all government servant working under him.
- b. No government employee shall use his position or influence directly or indirectly to secure employment for any member of his family in any private undertaking.
- c. No government employees shall in the discharge of his official duties deal with any matter or give or sanction any contract to any undertaking or any other person is any member of this family is employed in that undertaking or any members of his family is interested in such matters or contract in any other manner.
- d. No Government servant shall engage himself or participate in any demonstration which is prejudiced to the interest of sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the state, public order, decency or morality or which involves contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.
- e. No Government servant shall join or continue to be a member of an association, the object or activities of which are detrimental to the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India or public order or morality.

#### **Conference of Chief Minister of the States in May 1997**

An action plan for Effective and Responsive Government was discussed and adopted at the conference of Chief Ministers of the States in May 1997.

The three main themes dealt with in the Action plan were

1. accountable and citizen – friendly government ;
2. Transparency and right to information and
3. (iii)Improving the performance and integrity of the public services<sup>11</sup>.

#### **Fifth Pay Commission**

- a. Downsizing the government through corporatization of activities which involves ‘manufacturing of goods or the provision of commercial services’;
- b. Transparency; openness and economy in the government operation through ‘privatization of activities where government does not need to play a direct role’ and also ‘contracting out of services which can be conveniently outsourced to the private sector’.
- c. Contractual appointment in selected areas of operations for the purpose of maintaining a certain flexibility in staffing both for lateral entry of experts, moderating the number deployed depending on the exigencies of work and ensuring availability of most competent and committed personnel for certain sensitive/specialized jobs.
- d. The central government has been advised to go for a thirty percent reduction in the strength of the civil services. The normal procedure of voluntary retirement after completing twenty years should be continued. The others significant recommendation of the commission concerns ‘openness’ in administration.

#### **Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC)**

The second ARC set up by the Government on 31 August 2005, under the chairmanship of Veerappa Moily suggested measures to achieve a ‘proactive, responsive, accountable, sustainable and efficient administration for the country at all levels of the government. Some of the important recommendations of the commission include.

1. A National Institution of Public Administration to be established to offer Bachelor’s Degree courses in public administration, governance and management.



2. The permissible age for appearing in the civil services examinations to be 21-25 years for general candidate; 21-28 years for candidates for OBC candidates, and 21-29 years for candidates from SC/ST as well as physically challenged candidates.
3. The number of permissible attempt should be three, five and six for the general, OBC, SC/ST/Physically handicapped candidates, respectively.
4. As a capacity – building measure, it suggested that every government servant should undergo a mandatory training at the induction stage and also periodically during his/her career.
5. A central civil services authority to be set up which, among other things, would formulate guidelines for appointments at the ‘Senior Management level’ in the Government of India.
6. Citizen – centricity, with the aim of ensuring satisfaction, is critical for any government which aims to provide good governance. Some of the measures suggested by the commission to make the administration citizen centric are the adoption of appropriate modern technology, right to information, citizens’ charter, grievance redressal mechanism, and active citizens’ participation
7. In order to ensure ethics in governance, the commission recommends for the establishment of a national ombudsman to be called as ‘Rashtriya Lokayukta’.
8. It suggests that the state vigilance commission/Lokayukta may be empowered to supervise the prosecution of corruption related cases.
9. The commission recommends for greater devolution of powers and responsibilities in order to empower the local institution of governance.
10. The commission also recommends the all officers with a larger public interface should have an online complaint tracking system; and
11. The commission in its first report titled right to information; master key to good governance has recommended that the official Secrets Act, 1923 be replaced and substituted by a chapter in the National Security Act. The Manual of office procedure be revised in the light of the provision of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005.

### **Sixth Central Pay Commission**

The Government of India constituted the sixth central pay commission on 5 October 2006 which submitted its report on 24 March 2008.

The main recommendations of the commission are as follows:-

- a. **Reduction of Layers:** The commission has recommended reducing the layers within the government structure so that decisions making and delivery is expedited. From thirty five standard pay scales, the grades have been reduced to twenty, spread across four distinct running pay bands, one apex scale and another grade for the post of cabinet secretary and equivalent.
- b. **Restoring Pride in Public Services:** Government employees have to be motivated to take pride in public services. Thus, the commission has recommended various measures for job enhancement and job enrichment.
- c. **Delegation with Accountability:** Restoring delegation with accountability at each level in the decision making process is one of the main thrust areas proposed by the commission. Up gradation of critical cutting edge jobs like teachers, staff nurses, constables, and so on has been recommended.
- d. **Ensuring the Availability of the Best Possibility Talent for Government:** The Commission has recommended for lateral entry at higher level in the government to ensure availability of the best possible talent from within and outside government with performance contracts.
- e. **Performance Related Incentive Scheme (PRIS):** The introduction of a PRIS is designed to reward performance, innovation, creativity and responsive delegated administration of stakeholder interface for inclusive outcome and service delivery.

### **The Draft Bill (2009)**

The draft civil services Bill 2009 propose a set of values for the civil services and civil servant in chapter III. They are :-

1. Democratic values ;
2. Patriotism, upholding national pride and allegiance to the constitution and the law of the nation;
3. Accountability objectivity, impartiality, honesty, diligence, courtesy, transparency, compassion, courage, loyalty and faith;
4. Spirit of service and self sacrifice;
5. Empathy towards weaker sections and respect for human rights;
6. Absolute integrity; and
7. Professionalism.



The Draft Bill(2009), in chapter IV, provide for the preparation of a civil services code of conduct and Ethics which shall contain provisions for imposing restrictions on civil servants/issuing directions on the issues relating to :

1. Employment of near relatives of civil servants in companies or firms;
2. Taking part in politics or elections;
3. Connection with press or radio;
4. Criticism of Government;
5. Evidence before committees;
6. Unauthorized communicating of information.
7. Subscriptions, gifts, dowry;
8. Public demonstration in honour of civil servants;
9. Private trade or employments;
10. Investment, lending and borrowing;
11. Insolvency and habitual indebtedness;
12. Movable, immovable and valuable property;
13. Observance of cultural norms;
14. Restrictions regarding marriage; and
15. Consumption of intoxicating drinks and drugs.

#### **The Hota Committee (2004)**

The committee made the following important recommendations.

- Age for entrance to civil services should be 21-24 years for general conditions with five years concession to members of SCs/STs and three years for OBCs.
- Annual performance plans for the officers.
- After fifteen years of rigorous review, if an officer is not found honest and performance- oriented, he shall be weeded out of service.
- The duties, functions and responsibilities of all senior posts to be laid down and publicized.
- Article 311 of the constitution to be amended to enable president/governor to dismiss/remove public servants in case of corrupt practice/having assets disproportionate to known source of income.
- Antiquated rules and procedures in government must be discarded and new simplified ones be put in place.
- E-governance to be encouraged to augment efficiently and ensure transparently in government;
- Civil servants should be encouraged to move laterally to NGO's and
- To increase the representation of women in the civil services ; It is proposed that within fifteen years, at least 25 percents members of the higher civil service should be women as against 13 percent women at present.

#### **Civil Service Aptitude Test (CSAT)**

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) in 2001 appointed a committee of experts under the chairmanship of Yogendra Kumar Alagh to review the existing scheme of civil services examination. Based on The Alagh committee recommendations, the UPSC has finally decided to change the pattern of the preliminary examinations. This entrance test is rechristened “Civil service aptitude test” (CSAT). The new scheme will test the candidates of their aptitude, decision making skills, and analytical abilities rather than their memorizing ability.

**Right to Information Act:** In recognition of the need for transparency in public affairs, the Indian parliament enacted the Right to Information Act on 11 May 2005. The act provides for proactive disclosure of information, establishment of the Information Commission, appointment of public information officers, procedures for getting information and so on.

**Citizen's Charters:** The citizen's charter is an important tool to improve the quality of services, address the needs of citizens' rights and set clear standard of performance. Citizen's charters have the potential to bridge the gap between citizen's expectations and quality of public service delivery through change of mindset of the service providers and discharge of their own responsibility by the citizen.

**E-Governance:** E-governance is the short form of 'electronic governance'. If the government is done through the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), it is said to be e-governance. The Government approved the National E-Governance Action plan for implementation during the year 2003-2007. The plan is an attempt to lay the foundation and provide impetus for long-term growth of e-governance within the country.



Apart from the action plan, the following measures have also been introduced:

- Adoption of “Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000 by the Government of India to provide legal framework to facilitate electronic transactions.
- Establishment of the National Taskforce of Information Technology and Software Development in May 1998;
- Developing e-office solutions to enable various ministries and departments to do their work electronically. Modules such as Workflow for Drafts for Approvals, e-file, e-notings, submission of reports, integrated personal information and financial accounting systems have been developed;
- Setting up of a High Powered Committee (HPC) with Cabinet Secretary as its Chairman to improve administrative efficiency by using Information Technology in Government;
- Instituting websites by almost all Ministries and Departments and providing information on aspects such as their objectives, policies and decisions, contact persons, etc.
- Some of the general benefits of the introduction and management of an E-Government system include.
- Lower cost as well as improved efficiency and quality of services.
- More effective linkages between citizens and management.
- Improved efficiency of government workers.
- Facilitated transparency and accountability

**Lokpal and Lokayukta:** - The first ARC recommended the setting up of ombudsman type of institution both at the centre and states for dealing with complaints against the administrative acts of ministers or secretaries. The authority at the centre to be called Lokpal and at the state the Lokayukta many states have constituted ‘Lokayuktas’ to investigate allegations or grievances arising out of the conduct of public servants including political executives, legislators, officers of the state government, local bodies, public enterprises and other instruments of government. After eight failed attempts to pass a Lokpal Bill in the past, parliament finally gave it’s seal of approval to a powerful Ombudsman on December 18 2013. The Lokpal is empowered to probe complaints against all public servants including Prime Minister.

## **5. Conclusion**

Human nature being a blend of vice and virtue need to be tied up under a prescribed code of conduct and discipline. In the case of private individual they are tied down to their religious or social code, whereas the government employees are duty bound to follow the civil service conduct Rules formulated by the Government which in some matter may even be opposed to their religious or social code. A high moral standard of conduct on the part of public services is called for so as to set an example for the people and to run the public administration efficiently and impartially.

It is however a sad fact that public services in India have failed to cultivate high standards of conduct. There are for more lapses on the part of our civil servants corruption in civil services is widely rampant.

It may also be emphasized that for the achievement of high professional values the responsibility cannot be entirely placed upon the shoulders of the official. The official works in the society in which bribery, political corruption, business criminal, nexus, nepotism, favoritism, cast decisions lawlessness and low public morality exist.

A society in which these evils exist cannot have a chaste civil service. The society, therefore, must reform itself. However the public official can play an effective role in this direction. He is a part of the society but at the same time he is the philosopher and guide suggesting and correcting society. He himself should set high moral standards before the people. In a democracy, all the official of government are responsible to the people they must answer to their consciences, to their own fellowmen. And finally they should not leave any stone unturned in their honest effort to work for the total welfare of the people for whom they have been appointed to serve.

It is significant to note that in a vast country, like India, consisting of status with varied administrative practices and local conditions, it is difficult to be prescriptive about the extent of reform.



Recent initiatives for introduction of Citizen characters by government institutions, peoples RTI, E-government initiatives and the recent Lokpal at the Centre to check corruption, make it clear that the nation is heading towards a responsive people centric and accountable administrative system.

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