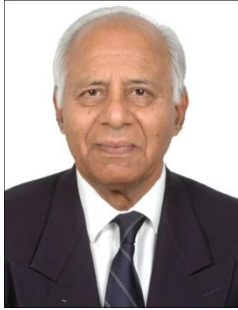


District Administration in UP



Anand Sarup

Born in Lahore on 5th January 1930 to Savitri Devi and Shanti Sarup. Brought up in an open environment, chiefly under the influence of a learned and iconoclastic grandfather who had, after much study and reflection, decided against denominational commitment. Anand Sarup developed a deep commitment to democracy and freedom because his family participated actively in the freedom struggle. In 1947, together with his family he went through the trauma of losing all, and then assumed an active role in rebuilding a new status and identity for the family. He joined the IAS in 1954 and held many unusual assignments including the Vice Chancellorship of the G.B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, which, in gratitude to his bailing it out of a system breakdown, conferred a D.Sc. (Honoris Causa) upon him. He retired in 1988 as Education Secretary, Government of India. Later, he became Chairman, National Book Trust. Also co-authored, with Sulabha Brahme, *Planning for the Millions*.

Editor's note: This is one of several stories about district administration and officials in Uttar Pradesh (UP) in the 1940s-1960s.

Introduction

It was February 1968. The wind was cold, and the chill was accentuated by the isolation of the place the five men were stuck in. The road between Ranikhet and Kathgodam had been blocked near the iron bridge leading to *Garam Pani*, Bhowali, the famous sanatorium. They were the personal staff members of senior officers returning to Kathgodam from a conference in Ranikhet. The senior officers had managed to get escape the blockade by walking across the bridge, leaving their heavy luggage and bulky papers with their staff, who would bring it later when the blockade was lifted.

The staff, powerful in their own jurisdictions, was somewhat at a loss in this remote place. Until the blockade was cleared, they had to somehow manage their lives with locally available provisions and accommodation. They had got hold of whatever was available with a Forest guard. It was not much - just some bug-infested charpoys, a table lamp and a lantern. And there was someone who could light a fire, cook them a frugal meal, and do odds and ends.

During the day, these five men could while their time by playing cards or keep looking out for news about the lifting of the blockage. But, by 6.00 pm, darkness enveloped everything. The meals were served in rough metal plates by the 'host' who was anxiously awaiting their departure. He was a doleful character. Not cheerful company.

On top of it, he advised every body to stay indoors at night. His stories about leopards and tigers, which infested the area, scared the five men. They were unwilling to venture outside more than ten yards from his doorstep. There was an oppressive feeling of being under duress.

Fortunately for this group, a grey haired old man, Ram Singh Bisht, turned up with a gun in one hand and a whiskey bottle in the other. He too was feeling stymied by the blockade, and wanted some company. He could not go even to nearby Bhowali for his newspaper and his daily provisions. He told the visitors that he decided to bring a bottle of whiskey because it wasn't any use to him without them because he never drank alone. The five men greeted this with enthusiasm because now there was a welcome diversion from doing nothing and just waiting uncertainly for deliverance.

Their joy was greatly enhanced when Bisht told them that he had retired as a stenographer to the District Judge of Nainital in 1955. Since most of the visitors were also civil servants, Bisht was a person of their kind, with whom communication would not be a problem.

Soon, Bishtji opened up with his stories about his favourite District Judge, who was unusually strict and honest but was also a little peculiar in his daily life.

Editor's note: Bishtji's story about the Judge is presented in [Judge Saheb – Judicial Administration in UP](#).

After Bishtji story about judges, it was the turn of Radha Krishna Gupta, a wizened old man who always wore a silk shirt. Guptaji was the P.A. (Personal Assistant) to a Superintending Engineer (SE) in the Public Works Department (PWD).

Editor's note: Guptaji story about engineers is presented in [PWD Administration in UP](#).

The Collector's P.A.

Now in 1968, Taufiq Mohammed, the P.A to the Collector of Farrukhabad district, said that Collector has become an anachronism. He started his story by explaining why he was keenly interested in the lives of Collectors.

(An Indian State is composed of several districts. The administrative head of each district is the Collector and District Magistrate. Under British rule, a Collector was considered an independent unit of the State government, and considered himself to be, and still thinks, he is the representative of the State in the area. During British times, a Collector who considered himself the guardian of the people in his area occasionally stood up for people of his area, even against orders of the government. A district is divided into several *Talukas* or *Tehsils*, which usually comprised an area with a population of around a hundred thousand people. The Tehsildar is the administrative head of the *Tehsil*.)

He had stood third in the university in his M.A. in Mathematics. This made him feel that he had a fair chance of making it to the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), India's premier administrative service. Since his father was the Office Superintendent of the Collector's office in Jalaun district, Taufiq knew a great deal about the role and power of Collectors. This made him eager to get into the IAS, but he failed.

As a young man from a middle class family, Taufiq knew that he had no choice but to find some other job. His family was happy when he got a low-level job at the Collectorate at Jalaun, based on his skill and speed as a stenographer. Soon afterwards, he was married off into a well-to-do family in Etawah. After completing her education, his wife got a job in Fatehgarh as a schoolteacher, so he decided to move there. Taufiq himself went on to get additional degrees in Political Science and Law.

Because of his wide-ranging knowledge and his skills as a P.A, he was able to stay on in his job without any fear of replacement. He was sure that as long as he was courteous and didn't talk loosely, he would be able to stay on as long as he wanted in Fatehgarh.

He was happy with his day-to-day life. Together, he and his wife earned a reasonably good living. To avoid giving a false impression, he admitted that he certainly made some extra money also.

The role of the Collector

The Collector stayed in a district for around three years, though the tenure had begun to shrink. In the first year, he – there were no women Collectors in British India or the early years of free India – kept touring and inspecting almost every institution, at the district headquarters and in every Tehsil and every *kanungo* (revenue officer) office. The purpose was to get to know the district. In addition, the idea was to impress on the minds of the people in all parts of the district that the Collector was there, as a physical presence in their midst, working for their protection and welfare. This is how the British government and also the government of free India visualised the role and function of the Collectors. The Collectors were mainly

field officers whose first priority was the well-being, the development and protection of the people living in rural areas. This was true essentially for British India.

It all started with the East India Company, which ventured into local administration on contract to collect land revenues for areas under local chieftains and big feudal lords, who disdained sullyng their hands with what they regarded as “petty matters” of revenues and management of local areas. Initially the British took over only collection of revenues. Later, since any breakdown of governance tended to reduce land revenues, they began to look at law and order, and revenue and land records. Therefore, the Collector had to get involved with other aspects of governance also.

When the British took over the direct governance of British India, the Collector became responsible for maintenance of peace and establishment. He was also designated as the District Magistrate, and perhaps more importantly, the local representative of the British government within his jurisdiction.

In free India, a new Collector came into his own only after he had spent about a year. Then, he could speak to the District Planning Officer and the other Development Personnel with confidence derived from his detailed knowledge of the district. The inspections of the Police Stations enabled the Collector to understand the patterns of crime in various areas and how this was related to the condition of the farmers and the topography of various areas. He was also able to size up the Station House Officers (SHOs), who were the heads of the various police stations.

The Collector was indisputably the first in the district hierarchy. Normally he, the Civil Surgeon, the District Judge and the Superintendent of Police (SP) – the Big Four – formed a close circle, wining and dining among themselves. The Big Four met at the club and played Bridge or tennis among themselves. Whenever a high-level functionary visited the district, there was a round of parties at the homes of each one of the Big Four.

All districts have a Civil Lines, where there are large houses, some a century old, for the Collector. Around this house, there are the houses of the District Judge, the Superintendent of Police and the Civil Surgeon. Typically, a Collector’s house has large verandas, in front and in the back. These houses also have big lawns and a couple of rooms in front for the ‘camp’ office in the Collector’s residence.

Prior to the 1960s, the Collector and the SP seldom called on anyone outside the Big Four. When a new Collector or SP joined a district, the local gentry, who seldom included politicians, came to call on them.

The Collectors did not call on politicians – not even Ministers. When a Minister came to the district, the Collector did not call on him unless he was on an official visit. There were clear rules explaining the difference between official and unofficial visits. Even the Chief Minister, on an unofficial visit, was received and seen off only by the Collector – no other District staff members were involved.

This differentiation was very important. Following the adoption of the Indian Constitution, there was a progressive politicisation of governance. This led to a great increase in the number of ministers, deputy ministers, parliamentary secretaries, and other prominent politicians who felt that the bureaucracy was at their beck and call. Unfortunately, the civil servants also fell victim to this notion and started playing ‘subordinates’ to these self-appointed overseers. Nobody told them that the design of governance evolved through the Constitution, under the leadership of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel, did not envisage the establishment of personal fiefdoms of either the civil servants or the politicians.

At this point, much to the relief of his listeners, Taufiq stepped out of his political reverie and reverted to the kind of things his listeners wanted to hear. He said one could not generalise about today’s Collectors based on the lurid stories circulating about Collectors of the past. These days most Collectors adopt a working style quite unlike their predecessors. They have to put in a lot of effort to stay where they are or get to their preferred postings. They have a clear-cut agenda: put in as little effort as possible in the

performance of official duties, and invest time primarily on keeping Ministers and other prominent politicians happy, without displeasing the Commissioner (the Collector's boss). Try to keep your nose clean by doing as little as possible and avoiding antagonising anybody. Who knows who is connected to whom?

Benefits of being a Collector

As a Collector, you can get whatever you want without going to the market: shopkeepers will send you samples of anything you want to see. Finally, finally when you select something, call the *Nazir* (the official responsible for making purchases for the government) who will perhaps get it for you – free. The *Nazir* is a very resourceful person who can do anything, except milk a bull. Every (or almost) every Collector depends on the *Nazir*.

When a new Collector arrives, one of the first people who came calling on the Collector's wife was the *Nazir*, to inquire about what she would need to settle down and generally apprise her of his resourcefulness. Whatever he does, he does most discretely. There was one Collector whose father was living with him. The old man told the *Nazir* that he had a lot of time on his hands: he would like to have a few buffaloes to keep him busy. The *Nazir* pulled some wires, and next week there were seven buffaloes tethered in the Collector's compound.

When the Collector went on tour, he seldom took any cook or any food provisions with him. The *Nazir* of the *Tehsil* arranged everything for the Collector and his staff.

Most Collectors do not meet important people in the Collectorate, preferring to meet them in the residential office, where the *zamindars* (property owners), businesspersons and the big people could be offered a cup of tea or coffee, discretely, in private. I remember how one of the Collector's orderlies, sized up the status of each of the visitors, and made it known to others by his offering them or not deigning to offer them cloves and cardamom from his small golden box.

Actually, the Collector's visitors have to go through a mini obstacle race. They are stopped first by one of his orderlies to ask what his/her business is, and, if possible, extract a few rupees as *baksheesh*. Once cleared from there, he comes up to me (Taufiq) to sign the visitor's register and only then is he allowed to go in to see the Collector. However, senior politicians and people of substance are ushered straight in to the outer drawing room. In this game of 'stop the pesky intruder', sometimes-poor people do get prevented from seeing the Collector. No doubt, there is a somewhat feudal air about the Collector's office.

Taufiq said that an IAS officer came into his own when he became a Collector. Taufiq had found that people always talked of their first posting as Collector with nostalgia: it remains their finest hour in service. It is unforgettable, comparable to the first night of honeymoon or thrill of a boy's first ride on his very own bicycle.

Invariably, there is a clutch of peons and orderlies hovering round the Collector's house. It is up to the Collector or his wife to decide whether they are also to be used for the performance of household jobs. They are willing to do anything for the privilege of working as a part of the Collector's establishment.

These establishments were set up in days when a Collector had a monthly salary of around fifteen hundred rupees or even more, at a time when prices were low. The monthly salary of gardener or a cook was five or ten rupees. You could buy a *seer* (about a kg) of ghee for just a rupee; mangoes were five seers for half a rupee, and wheat sold at two and a half rupees per *maund* (nearly 40 kg). But, in the pre-Independence days, no Collector bought these things – they were just delivered to him free of charge.

This system persisted after Independence. Even in 1959, when one Collector himself visited the market to buy vegetables and cantaloupes, the landholding gentry was outraged and protested at this insult to their self-respect. Why did he have to go to the market like the common people, they asked, when they were at his beck and call? In the old days, during the festival season and on Christmas and New Year, it was customary for people who considered themselves important to offer seasonal fruits, dry fruits, wines, and whiskies to the Collector and other officials of the district. The practise of offering a basket of fruits or dry fruits and a bottle or two of Scotch still continues. *Editor's note: The reference is to 1968.*

Living in relative isolation in a large bungalow, with vast grounds around them where, as one Collector in British days said, 'silence is broken occasionally when a cow passes', often led to understandable megalomania. This was exaggerated by the fact that in an entire district with a population of ten to fifteen lakhs, nobody in the Collector's presence could say that he was wrong. There is no doubt that even today the Collector continues to think and act like a feudal lord.

Lately, one factor is tending to modify the authoritarian and feudal mindset of the Collectors. Since 1956, the Community Development Programme has been encouraging (and perhaps forcing) the processes of governance to change. Earlier, the big boss spoke and the others listened but it was now emphasised that the lower level functionaries, such as the Gram Pradhans and the Village Level Workers should be allowed to have their say because they are close to the ground reality. Old and seasoned Collectors think this travesty is forcing the administrative system to stand on its head. However, *some* Collectors are beginning to imbibe the underlying values of humility and public service of the Community Development Programme and trying not merely to govern but also to serve the people.

One of the things I observed was that foreign whiskey was a great corruptor of officers. I am not saying this because I am a teetotaler: I do enjoy a drop or two when I can lay my hands on it. However, in a district in which there is prohibition on the stocking and consumption of liquor, surrendering to this temptation can be fatal to discipline. I noticed that in one district an Honorary Magistrate was known to wield a lot of influence because the Collector and the SP visited his house every evening for their drinks, in a district in which drinking of alcohol was banned. Naturally, the Honorary Magistrate extracted his pound of flesh by getting favours they could not refuse. He became the contact point for people within the district administration for obtaining favours. If some officer wanted posting to a better a better police station or needed to be extricated from charges for a misdemeanour, he went to this intermediary, and it worked wonders.

For the greedy Collectors, on the make, the most profitable part of their business was related to land transactions, as they involved considerable sums of money being paid under the table. Most of the time, the Collector himself did not have to do anything. It was enough if he simply overlooked what was happening in the Tehsildars' domain with regard to land transactions. From time to time, a case came up in which a Zamindar wanted to take over a particularly fertile area from the tenants and he was willing to pay a large sum for making the necessary adjustments. In such cases, the Tehsildar facilitated the transaction by establishing a partnership with the Collector – and both were handsomely rewarded.

Travel hospitality

At this stage, our narrator noticed that his listeners were getting bored with his stories. Therefore, he changed the focus of the stories and started talking of how the hospitality required of the field functionaries sometimes embarrassed the upright officers.

There was one Collector who noticed that when he went on tour, there was a retinue of at least six people accompanying him – two orderlies, one Personal Secretary, one driver and one peon. It was customary that the Tehsil staff should arrange for their boarding and miscellaneous needs. The Collector tried to reduce the burden this placed on the Tehsil resources by travelling with just one orderly. But, it did not

work. When he visited any place, the senior staff of the Tehsil decided to accompany him, so that the number in his party did not come down.

He had the most embarrassing experience about extravagant hospitality when he stopped at Shahjahanpur, at the insistence of the City Magistrate, on his way from Lucknow to Bareilly. The Collector was accompanied by a couple of academicians studying the culture of administration in UP.

When the party stopped for lunch, the fare offered included a fabulous meal consisting of vegetable and meat Biryani, kebabs, fish, Koftas, some vegetable dishes, and two kinds of dessert. It was overwhelming. The Collector was greatly embarrassed by this extravagance. He paid the City Magistrate a hundred rupees per person in his party, and apologised to for being unable to pay the prohibitive full cost of the meal. Later, before going off, he took his guests to the kitchen and showed them that all the eight persons of the Magistrate's staff were the same food, for which, he said, that the Tehsildar must have paid the money.

Good Collectors

Undoubtedly, many Collectors had become shysters and self-seekers. But there were still some who worked hard, according to the word and spirit of the Constitution, and took the consequences gracefully. Interestingly, most of them did not suffer in the end. When faced with unusual problems, the Government had no choice to seek the help of people who had not atrophied and who could think out of the box.

But, those who had bartered their independence for pots of gold are in the majority. While government rules required Collectors to spend 120 days and 90 nights on tour, out in the field, many did not go out for more than ten days in a year. If they had an inconvenient boss who insisted that they tour, they made fictitious tours and in the process managed to draw Travelling Allowance, and take a commission from the Tehsil for fraudulent bills for carting the huge paraphernalia for field touring provide by the government.

Some Collectors looked forward to these camping tours. They often took a gun and possibly a horse to visit the countryside. They would occasionally bag a few quails or partridges, and if they were lucky, even a wild duck or a deer. But, there were others, who loved who enjoyed going all over their jurisdiction to see things for themselves, all over the length and breadth of the district and re-established confidence in the minds of the people in the far-flung areas of the district, in their area.

Crazy Horse

I recall one Collector who came to be called 'the Crazy Horse' because he travelled so much. He who took it upon himself to actually tour for 120 days and 90 nights, going to places that had not been visited by any of his predecessors since 1947. I had to type out his long, fact-filled 'inspection notes'. In the course of his tours, he visited and recorded his observations in respect of ten Police Stations, twenty cooperatives, all the Town Area committees of the District, five *Nyaya Panchayats*, thirty *Gaon Sabhas* and *Gaon Samaj* institutions, several Block Development Offices. In addition, he also visited twenty villages for the spot verification of their records.

After some time, an equally barmy Deputy Collector, who knew revenue administration in and out, and who got attracted by the Collector's plan to see every remote area, joined him. Together, they, accompanied by me, went to some places on horseback, some on a boat fitted with an outboard motor and some, even on foot to register the presence of 'government' to people in remote areas. In all the years of my service with Collectors, I have never come across another officer who was so greatly interested in what was happening in his district.

In contrast, the Collector whose father tended buffaloes never went out of the headquarters because he could not bear to be separated from his very charming wife. He also couldn't think of subjecting her to the rigours of the outback. If one assesses the fortunes of these two Collectors, the one with the pretty wife did much better because he was always around to look after politicians. He also did not annoy his subordinates by always checking what they were up to. This got him an excellent job appraisal from the Commissioner. On the other hand, Crazy Horse earned an adverse rating from this boss because he was too busy learning about his district to look after his boss's needs.

Dhyan Pal Singh

Dhyan Pal (D. P.) Singh was a local officer, unlike IAS officers, who had been promoted to Collector. Many such 'promoted' Collectors were burdened by a sense of obligation to those whose support had raised them to the position of Collector.

However, there are some but rare 'promoted' people like D. P. Singh who do not feel beholden to anyone for anything. With the advantage of years of service, they knew the ropes and were able to achieve a great deal in their assignments. D.P. Singh was a most celebrated Collector of Etawah. Later, he did a lot to establish the Community Development Programme. He went on to become the Vice-Chancellor of the G.B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, where he worked wonders in ushering in the Green Revolution in Northern India.

However, let me not forget to mention that some of D.P. Singh's 'promoted' colleagues did everything that should not have been done by IAS officers. They became like rogues elephants. They felt that they were no longer vulnerable because of their connections with the senior officers as well as the politicians. These people cause nothing but heartaches to young officers posted with them, with the exception of those youngsters who are connected to influential people of the state. These people show youngsters in their formative years of how greed, chicanery and hypocrisy can lead to success in one's career.

The direct recruits to the IAS who escape being victimised by such unprincipled bosses remain idealistic at least for a while. However, over time, the youngsters forget the idealistic mumbo-jumbo learnt during their training, and accept the pragmatist's recipe for career advancement.

Sultan Baig

After the departure of the hard drinking Collector who was friendly with the Honorary Magistrate, came Sultan Baig, an idealist. On his first day as the new Collector, Sultan wanted to find out for himself what was actually happening in his district. To avoid recognition, he wore nondescript clothes, and visited various government offices, without disclosing his identity.

At the *Kotwali* (police station), he found many people waiting to meet the SHO, the police chief of the area. Among them, some people had come to report a murder and dacoity in broad daylight the previous day. These people had spent more than twelve hours at the police station but the police officers had not registered their case. Worse, they complained, the SHO and the constables on duty had asked them to bring food and liquor for their dinner and told them afterwards that their case would be registered the next morning. It was already well past eleven o'clock but till then they had not even been allowed to tell their story in detail. When Sultan, pretending to be an ordinary citizen, tried to intervene, he was threatened with arrest and prosecution for interference with the official duties of a government servant!

At the *Sadr* (main) *Tehsil*, at the district headquarters, everything seemed well organised. A clerk was receiving the documents to be registered and applications for changes in land records. He was collecting some money from every one, without issuing any receipt. On inquiry, Sultan was told that there was a fixed rate for everything. Everybody knew the going rate for the work to be done and there was no hassle. He purposely asked a litigant as to why no receipt was being issued for the money paid. His question was

loudly and laughingly repeated for all to hear, and somebody then pointed out that he obviously was 'wet behind the ears'.

When Sultan arrived at the Collectorate, he was amused to find that the Arms Clerk was shoosing everyone out, telling them that they would now to pay much more because the new Collector was an extremely strict officer. Baig pointedly asked for the application form for a revolver license. He was asked to come again after a week because the office had run out of these forms. He was also informed that he would have to give a present of at least two hundred rupees now so that he could get the form later.

Baig had started enjoying this game of deceit. Therefore, he went on to the District Arms Officer with the complaint that the Arms Clerk wanted a bribe of two hundred rupees. This officer heard him patiently, made sympathetic noises, but at the end told did nothing except to tell him to come again with a written complaint.

In the following few days, the Tehsildar, the Arms Officer and the SHO came to call on Sultan Baig. They realised that they had seen him before in their own offices, and they knew that they had an unpredictable character on their hands. In a place where everything happened in a predictable manner, nothing could be more unsettling.

Another thing Baig did was to evaluate whether he really need a large house with several lawns around it to perform his duties. He concluded he did not need them. Further, he could not afford to pay either for the maintenance of the house or of the lawns. On top of it, the house was keeping the public at a distance to create an aura of exclusivity around the Collector – which he did not like. To make himself more accessible to people, he did two things.

First, he decided to stop the practise of meeting people at the residential office. Instead, he would get to his office earlier than normal, and meet his visitors there. His decision to move his morning meets at his office was not to the liking of his personal staff, which were in charge at the camp office at his residence. At the office, he set up a simple system that made it clear that every petitioner was equal, and he was willing to deal impartially with everybody irrespective of his status. Whatever happened in his office was now transparently clear to everybody.

Second, he asked the Government to let him abandon the house the Collector had occupied for many decades and move into a small bungalow adjacent to the district courts. This proposal created a furore. The Commissioner sent for him and told him that, after consultation with the Government, his proposal had been decisively rejected. The Chief Secretary, who had himself lived there as a Collector, believed that such a move would minimise not only his own status as the Collector but would also create a problem for his successors. When Baig raised the question of cost of maintenance, he was told that to use funds placed at the disposal of the Tehsil for sundry labour charges. Baig realised that his move to a smaller home would generate negative repercussions at all levels in the Government. Since he did not, as yet, want to have a full-blown war with the establishment, he gave in after placing his protest on record.

Baig had been posted to this district largely because it was regarded as a 'troubled' district, given its large population of Muslims. He noticed that very few Muslims came to call on him. He decided to break protocol by inviting Muslim families to his parties, even though they had not called on him. The invitees were puzzled. Why a Collector would offer tea and refreshments to people who had ignored his arrival, they asked themselves. Still, they did attend his parties.

After several Muslim families had attended his parties, a group of prominent Muslims came to call on Sultan. They thanked him for his hospitality, and also asked him the reason for their inclusion among his guests.

This is what Baig was waiting for. He was blunt with them. Why was he, a Muslim Collector, the son of a distinguished family albeit from Lahore, being ignored by his own community? The visitors explained that it was only ten years had passed since the formation of Pakistan, for which some of them had agitated vehemently. Why should it surprise him if some of them felt guilty and under suspicion?

Baig was equally frank with them. His family had come away from Pakistan because his father was a secular Muslim who was ashamed that non-Muslims should be driven out of their homes in the name of Pakistan. Now, as a Collector in a free and secular India, Sultan was convinced that the upliftment of the Muslim community, which was indisputably backward, could not take place without the initiative of some people from the local Muslim community. Besides, without their participation, the gap with other communities and the government administration would never be bridged.

Why should the Islamia School for girls be in such neglect? It was not as if the educated Muslims were boycotting employment opportunities in government. The District Government Counsels for Criminal and Civil Justice were both Muslims. If they could accept government patronage, why should they and others of the community play no role in the resuscitation of the Muslim community?

The results of this reasonably worded reprimand were astounding. For example, within a couple of months, the Managing Committee of the Islamia Girls' School was revived and eligible girls were induced to get admitted with promises of privacy, scholarships and reasonable fees.

Later, during winter season, a known poet residing in the district was asked to organise a grand *Mushaira* at which some of the most well known poets, including Shakeel Badayuni came to recite their poetry. This became a great occasion for conviviality in which a lot of people participated. Among those who attended, the *Mushaira* was Hafiz Mohammed Ibrahim, a Union Minister who happened to have come to attend a wedding in town.

Baig was an upright officer. Nevertheless, an unwitting action created an embarrassment for him. When the Tehsildar from Gunnaur, reputed for Desi ghee came to see him on an official business, on the prodding of his cook, Sultan gave him money and asked him to send him a large tin of the best ghee he could secure. A week later, one of his friends, Mr Siddiqui, came and tauntingly asked him as to when he had started getting free ghee from Tehsildars.

Baig was surprised and assured him that he had paid the price of ghee in advance. Mr Siddiqui told him that everyone knew about the ghee coming from the particular Tehsildar. But, how would they know that the Collector had paid for it? Since his predecessors always had free ghee from Gunnaur, people would assume that he too was doing the same.

Baig asked Mr Siddiqui how he came to know that Sultan had asked for ghee from Gunnaur. Mr Siddiqui explained that the story had started from the bus driver who, at Gunnaur, delivered the ghee to his cleaner with instructions to deliver it to the Tehsildar Sadr. The bus driver, the cleaner, the Tehsildar Sadr, and his peon who came carrying the ghee – they all knew that the ghee had come from Gunnaur, so they presumed it was free. Then, the rumour mill, which was forever looking for chinks in Baig's shining armour, had carried the 'news', which had reached Siddiqui.

This incident made Baig much more cautious about the unintended effect of his actions.

Epilogue – summary

Editor's note: At the editor's request, the author has written a comprehensive epilogue that covers a range of issues related to India's administrative system before and after Independence. A summary is presented first, followed by the complete text.

By the 1940s, the institution of a District Officer, responsible for collecting the revenues, maintaining law and order, dispensing justice according to the codes of laws enacted by the British Parliament for India, had emerged as the pivot for the governance of British India. This person, who was known as Collector cum Deputy Commissioner, was regarded as power plenipotentiary of the British Empire in India, with the authority to watch over the functioning of almost all district-level officials.

At the time of India's Independence, there were claims that, under British rule, the Indian Civil Service (ICS) Collectors had improved the lives of the rural people by closely supervising the functioning of the bureaucratic system by reaching out to the common people by their close supervision and their extensive touring all over their districts. We can sum up this story of the ICS and the British bureaucracy by saying that most of the ICS and their ilk were willing to let well alone rather than take cudgels with their masters, even though they had a lot of leeway because their masters were far away in distant Britain.

At Independence, the biggest challenges for the new government were: the administrative integration of the Princely States into the national system; the putting out of communal conflagrations; the management of decrepit infrastructure; and dealing realistically with acute shortages of essential goods. These presented a set of complex challenges.

The situation was confounded further by the fact that a large scale administrative churning had taken place on the eve of Independence because many ICS officers left India, and Indian officers were allowed to quit so that they could move to India or Pakistan. This was allowed to happen without considering how this movement would affect governance. This churning created a serious hiatus. Administration got disorganised and managerial functions had to be organised through hastily propped up officials.

India had the best minds to lay down some of the parameters for the new administrative services. Nehru, Patel, and Ambedkar – they had all studied the working of the British bureaucrats, while studying law in United Kingdom and also later as administrators setting tasks for them. However, they had never handled the mechanics of recruitment, training or managing a cadre of civil servants. They had no idea of what role morale plays in the performance of civil services and how it gets lowered and how it has to be restored.

India's leaders were so pressed with difficult problems that they could at most provide a framework for the Indian Administrative and Police Services, and make marginal adjustment in the regulations for the Central services and then let the details for recruitment rules and the arrangements for training and orientation and also for management be worked out by lesser mortals at the National and State levels. This is where the systems were hit by the critical absence of time, patience and experiential wisdom for working out the details.

When the IAS was created, it was, unfortunately not made clear that the IAS would have to be different from the ICS. Further, in making selections for the new established services, the selectors often forgot the nature of the new challenges which would surface because of the republican nature of Indian Polity and the way behaviour of the politicians on the ground might shape up in view of their physical proximity to the political executives running governments.

Judging by the standards of the British bureaucracy, the IAS has been a magnificent failure! There is no denying that, generally, the IAS consists of extremely intelligent people. They are sharp, quick, knowledgeable and easy learners. Most of them know what they want out of life, and from the start, they are on the go to achieve what they set out to accomplish. They are not fussy about the fact that other people might perceive them as corrupt, communal, compromising and self-seeking individuals who don't even have any *esprit-de-corps* as a redeeming feature. Even sundry politicians look upon them as tools meant essentially for somehow doing what they want for furthering their interests. Nobody is bothered,

whether or not they have incisive knowledge of ground level dynamics: they are not seen as people who can tell what will or will not work on the ground.

Those responsible for creating the IAS should have emphasised the need for humility among the rank and file of bureaucrats dealing with multidimensional situations, which India exemplifies. Instead, what we have are hierarchies of authoritarian regimes in departments and ministries at the Centre as well as States, where the demand for “consistently praiseworthy” performance by the seniors, has robbed the juniors of the self-esteem to look independently at life around them and reflect on it. In the process, they tend to get shaped to become tools in other people’s hands. They progressively start believing that they are not in the business of learning from their own observations and experiences to go on evolving, enriching altering and systematising a world view of their own. They decide, early in service that given the top-down system in which they have been placed, it would be dangerous to look upon themselves as members of a self-sustaining and interacting system. The system, they conclude, requires whiz kids or lawyers who can deliver whatever the boss, bureaucrat or politician wants of them.

Another thing which the designers of a new service should have emphasised at the outset should have been the absolute imperative of giving the members of the All-India Services emoluments which would have enabled them to live without having worry about how they would finance the minimum establishments required for living in relative dignity at home and also on tour, without sponging on subordinates.

The most grievous mistake was to fall into the trap of the members of the old guard vociferously speaking up for the officers of the Provincial Services and the Army Officers on the point of demobilisation, who they argued, were there, waiting to be called and given substantive positions. If they were taken in, there would be no difficulty to fill the hiatus created by the departure of expatriates. It was a situation in which no one was in a position to look the gift horse in the mouth. The net result was, that on the eve of freedom, most of the people functioning as Collectors were PCS officers, given temporary charge of the districts. These people were quickly created commissars, whose creators had no notion of the manner in which the ICS had evolved the strategy for selecting or training their fledglings.

While laying down the short and long term objectives of the bureaucratic system on the anvil, one could reasonably lay down the following parameters also for providing a cultural milieu to the young recruits:

- Feudalism and indebtedness were powerfully entrenched in rural life;
- Ignorance of the value system essential for dignity and survival of Tribals;
- Absence of commitment to the strategy and a resolve to end casteism and untouchability; and
- Bureaucracy was being established without any ethical or ideological foundations

Epilogue - complete

Pre-Independence India

To put it briefly, the Collectors started as the contractor for collecting and handing over the land revenues to the Nawab or the Raja or a Taluqdar too busy with his peccadilloes to collect even his revenues. Naturally the Collector collected his commission and for performing this function had also to look into and rectify maladministration, if it interfered with either the generation or the collection of revenues. As revenue collecting functionaries, the Collectors discovered that outbreaks of diseases, famines, the usurious practices of *sahukars* or even landowners doubling as money lenders, wanting to dispossess a cultivator, had to be dealt with severely to ensure the continuous and profitable pursuit of agriculture.

When vast territories came to be annexed by the East India Company Bahadur, or later by the British Government, a new breed of civil servants entered the scene. Quite a few of these had studied in Oxford

and Cambridge and imbibed the contemporary culture which wanted to spread democracy in Britain. Many of them were familiar with the ideas of Rousseau, Voltaire, the Utilitarians and even the writings even of Karl Marx and of the Americans who had revolted against the British Rule in the Americas. The biggest changes in the culture and the working of the ICS had been precipitated by the British involvement, with the First World War.

On the one hand, these currents and cross currents had shaken the belief that 'the Sun never sets in the British Empire', and on the other, it had confirmed the belief among many in the ICS and the other associated with British bureaucracy that they would have to pave the way for India's independence. However, the essentials of the role of the British bureaucratic system were defined so well by the celebrated ideologue of the ICS, Phillip Woodruff by stating on the eve of his departure by stating that if the man in a corner of a district felt that the Collector was there mainly to see that he was safe and to ensure his well-being, it would be greatest tribute to what the ICS and the British system of governance had sought to bequeath to India. In effect, this summation emphasised: the reaching out to the last man; the commitment to the farmers' well-being; and, the function of providing a shield against the powerful who might deprive him of his rights and safety.

For our purposes, it would suffice to state that by the 1940s, irrespective of the nomenclature, the institution of a District Officer, responsible for collecting the revenues, maintaining law and order, dispensing justice according to the codes of laws enacted by the British Parliament for India, had emerged as the pivot for the governance of British India. This person, who was known as Collector cum Deputy Commissioner, was regarded as power plenipotentiary of the British Empire in India, with the authority to watch over the functioning of almost all district-level officials. The exceptions were judicial officers placed in the charge of independent District Judges, who were answerable only to the High Courts.

In the overall scheme of governance, the most important elements at the district level were the Collector, who was also the District Magistrate (D.M.), District Judges, and the Superintendent of Police (S.P). The District Judges and their sub-judges were accepted as independent of the control of the Collector and D.M. The overlapping of the authority of the DM and the District Judge in the administration of criminal law came to an end in 1961-62. However, the administration of Revenue Law remained full under the authority of the Collector because he was responsible for the maintenance of land records so intimately concerned with the assessment and collection of land revenue and other taxes.

It needs to be mentioned here that there is a school of thought which even now rues the exclusion of the District Magistrates from the administration of criminal justice. The charge is that by excluding the District Magistrates from the functioning of courts, these courts were freed from the responsibility of showing to any superior authority, the extent to which they compromised with the principle of keeping a tight rein on the grant of adjournments and also the final disposal of cases. The functioning of the courts became a matter of mutual accommodation between the presiding officers of courts and the lawyers, without anybody keeping a check on what was happening between them from day or day.

As far as the Superintendent of Police (S.P.) was concerned, he was under the control of the Collector & DM. Of course, any S. P. always looking for ways to act on his own judgement but the Collectors & DMs knew that under the law, they could not compromise with their accountability for the law and order functions in their districts.

In the ultimate analysis, it was crucial for the Collector to know what was happening to the farmer and cultivator in his day to day life - whether he was holding his own against the high and mighty landlords, the outlaws and also the people at the lower rungs of his own bureaucracy. The Collector was required to know if the lands were being sown once and where possible also more than once and if in some areas lands were being left fallow, what were the reasons there for.

At the time of India's Independence, there were claims that, under British rule, the Indian Civil Service (ICS) Collectors had improved the lives of the rural people by closely supervising the functioning of the bureaucratic system by reaching out to the common people by their close supervision and their extensive touring all over their districts. They had also carried out, at the provincial and the central levels the reforms in conformity with their notions of liberal governance, as long these conformed to the signals and initiatives of the British Parliament.

We can sum up this story of the ICS and the British bureaucracy by saying that most of the ICS and their ilk were willing to let well alone rather than take cudgels with their masters, even though they had a lot of leeway because their masters were far away in distant Britain.

The situation was confounded further by the fact that a large scale administrative churning had taken place on the eve of Independence. First, most of the British ICS officers and other functionaries, had quit, even though the Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, had agreed to stay on and steer the country for some years. Second, government employees in the territories which were to form part of India and Pakistan were allowed to opt out of staying where they were, and were allowed to move away to other places in other provinces, in another country, on purely communal considerations. This was allowed to happen without considering how this movement would affect governance.

This churning created a serious hiatus. Administration got disorganised and managerial functions had to be organised through hastily propped up officials, of whom many had no experience of dealing either with the problems of that magnitude or of that area. Naturally, many of the appointees did not evoke much confidence among the people fearful for their lives.

Some exceptions

A. O. Hume (1829 - 1912) played a key role in the establishment of the Indian National Congress in the year 1883. He was originally a civil servant. His career in India included service as District Collector, Etawah (U.P.), head of a central department, and as Secretary to the Government of India, from 1870 to 1879.

He was very outspoken and never feared to criticise Government when he thought that it was in the wrong. In 1879 he angered the authorities by his outspokenness, and finally resigned in 1882. In 1883 he wrote an open letter to the graduates of Calcutta University, calling upon them to form their own national political movement. This led in 1885 to the first session of the Indian National Congress held in Bombay.

A.O. Hume did what he did and acted the way he did, inter alia, because he was the son of Joseph Hume, FRS, a Scottish doctor who had served for a while in the East India Company and therefore had a grasp of the Indian realities.

F.L. Brayne, Collector of Gurgaon in the 1920s was another ICS officer who was interested in India's development. He introduced what he called as the [Gurgaon Scheme of Rural Upliftment](#).

On the issue of the establishment of the Talukadari and Zamindari systems, many of the civil servants in Southern and Western India and also Punjab, had grave reservations; in the end, they, rather than the diehards favouring the Talukadari and Zamindari systems, prevailed.

Challenges at Independence

The biggest challenges for the new government were: the administrative integration of the Princely States into the national system; the putting out of communal conflagrations; the management of decrepit

infrastructure; and dealing realistically with acute shortages of essential goods. These presented a set of complex challenges.

There were, for instance, as many as 568 Princely states on the eve of Indian Independence, of which 572 were entitled to gun salutes of various order. Nearly all of them had their own army units, and in fairness, having taken over their territories, you had to accommodate them in a manner which would not cause too much hurt to their fragile egos. While dealing with his problem, you had also to keep in mind the need for preserving the morale of the tried and tested defence forces India had inherited from the British administration. Besides this, you had to accommodate a huge number assorted retainers of the Princely states into a rational administrative system. This obviously required the patience of Job and the mind of a master tactician.

In a letter written on 24th August 1947, Sardar Patel, the Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister of India, wrote to Mahatma Gandhi, who was in Calcutta:

The situation in Punjab is extremely grave. People there have lost all human sense and are burning villages and towns and massacring the innocents like they cut wood into pieces. The Military and Police have joined hands with them in committing these crimes. People in thousands have deserted their homes and wherever they go, they create panic in the atmosphere. ...

The situation is indeed alarming. It is likely to have repercussions on the other parts of the country also. In that case, it may be difficult to control the situation. The people in continuous streams are pouring into Delhi from the Punjab every day. They allow no respite to us day and night. They are so over laden with grief and fear and it is a Herculean task to heal or assuage their wounded feelings.

The food situation too has greatly deteriorated. The provinces which have surplus corn are not willing to part with their excess quota for to others. In Andhra, Prakasam and Ranga are misguiding people not to give any corn. Congress workers have lost their zeal for service and are fighting among themselves for loaves and fishes of office.”

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This churning created a serious hiatus. Administration got disorganised and managerial functions had to be organised through hastily propped up officials, of whom many had no experience of dealing either with the problems of that magnitude or of that area. Naturally, many of the appointees did not evoke much confidence among the people fearful for their lives.

Take for instance the City magistrate of Lahore, whom the Hindus and Sikhs trusted and who was also respected by the Muslims. All of a sudden he left for Delhi and was replaced by an unknown officer who did not inspire trust among the local people. To put it simply, in violence prone areas, old and trustworthy incumbents abruptly, and unfamiliar officers came in, all of a sudden, to deal with fearful people, who had every reason to distrust them. This happened because Indian and Pakistani leaders did not anticipate

communal violence, in spite of the riots in Noakhali, which had sent Gandhiji running to put an end to the spreading conflagration.

It can be reasonably asserted that the ICS and other personnel wanting to go back home would have agreed to serve India had Lord Mountbatten sought their help to sort out the crisis and assured them of continued support and fair play. When the elected leaders formed Provincial Governments as Chief Ministers in 1935, there was no exodus among the ICS. We know from the experience of many other countries, that continuing with the old guard is often better than sudden and wholesale change of guard. There were, however, some who argued that, for a poor country, the ICS were too expensive. Such people, many suspects, were more interested in putting their own men in key positions for personal benefits.

For these and so many other tasks, all of which had to be done immediately, the country required a veritable treasure house of wise and experienced executives. For reasons already cited, they were just not available. What was equally serious, even at the State and District levels, there was a serious shortage of personnel with requisite qualifications and experience. This meant that everybody at every level was expected to innovate to meet these shortages.

Normally, for important decisions, whether at the Centre or at the State Levels, briefs had to be prepared about the issues, possible solutions, available resources, pros and cons for the options and above all, the implementability of a proposal within the resources and the time available. All these refinements became unviable as soon as it became clear to the decision makers that in matters to be handled at the grassroots levels, the machinery for getting things done had collapsed.

Once the old guard had left, putting together a substitute became a matter of life and death. Of course, the judges, the lawyers, the doctors, the engineers, could wait for a while, but it was impossible to do without the policemen and the District collectors, to stop people from killing each other and at the same time, collect the revenues and ensure the maintenance of reliable land records.

The whole thing boiled down to putting together the best out of the immediately available men for these key jobs. Predictably this resulted in the bundling of the easily available personnel of the lower cadres, the army people from outfits like the supply corps, the emergency recruits awaiting demobilisation and many others to fill the burgeoning vacancies. While the ICS had been established after serious deliberations about what kind of people should be recruited, what should be their educational and personal qualifications, how they should be trained formally and informally and also how they shall be treated so that they will be able to play the roles required of them?

Creating a new administrative system

India had the best minds to lay down some of the parameters for the Indian Administrative Services (IAS). Nehru, Patel, and Ambedkar - they had all studied the working of the British bureaucrats, while studying law in United Kingdom and also later as administrators setting tasks for them. However, they had never handled the mechanics of recruitment, training or managing a cadre of civil servants. They had no idea of what role morale plays in the performance of civil services and how it gets lowered and how it has to be restored.

They did not have the benefit of the advice of the stalwarts from the ICS, who had studied the history of the service, fought some of its battles and learnt about challenges experienced at the grassroots level. They did not understand why high emoluments were necessary for maintaining the impregnable integrity of the ICS. Or, what kind of freedom of expression had to be provided to enable the service personnel to go on learning and not be worried all the time about the wrath of the senior officers. Besides, they did not understand the key role learning about the dynamics of the rural life played in framing policies at the state

and national levels. More than all else, those charged with creating the IAS, did not fully appreciate the importance of the political impartiality of the ICS. Nor did they know how difficult it was to safeguard it in the parliamentary system in which they have to be capable of functioning seamlessly with governments and their executives with radically different policies and ideologies.

One of the major changes the new order brought about after Independence was that the new crop of political functionaries demanded that the officers should take orders from them, particularly if the state or central government was of their party. They could not countenance a bureaucrat saying that a particular thing could not be done for them because it would go against the political interest of persons of the opposing party.

There was also a problem with many people in power equating private gains with public good. Differences over this, together with the insistence on adherence with political neutrality and refusal to accept orders of nobodies being set up to rule the roost by proxies, were the main causes of conflict between the honest bureaucrats and their new emerging political culture.

India's leaders were so pressed with difficult problems that they could at most provide a framework for the Indian Administrative and Police Services, and make marginal adjustment in the regulations for the Central services and then let the details for recruitment rules and the arrangements for training and orientation and also for management be worked out by lesser mortals at the National and State levels. This is where the systems were hit by the critical absence of time, patience and experiential wisdom for working out the details.

For the IAS, IPS and the Indian Forest Service, apart from the policies formulated at the National level, the policies and procedures laid down by the State Governments determined their efficacy and independence and impartiality. Judging from the mindset of the people heading the Union Public Service Commission for selecting personnel and the people placed at the head of the ragtag IAS and IPS Training Centres, it is clear that initially these UPSC and Training assignments were given, mindlessly to people who were misfits in their present assignments and sometimes in addition to the full-fledged jobs they were performing in other offices. In any case, the selection and training processes at best were pale and tawdry imitations of the approaches and procedures created, to suit the objectives and ideologies of the then rulers, before independence. Contrary to the philosophy of the British system, the whole exercise to put the ideas of the new policy makers was a quick fix by the person available in the national and state secretariats without consulting sagacious practitioners at the cutting edge level.

In making selections for the new established services, the selectors often forgot the nature of the new challenges which would surface because of the republican nature of Indian Polity and the way behaviour of the politicians on the ground might shape up in view of their physical proximity to the political executives running governments. They also tended to disregard the need for acculturation of the new entrants *vis-a-vis* the rough and tumble of practical politics at the ground levels. They often were theoretical in the solutions they sought and therefore provided no exposure of the new entrants to the experiences of persons who had spent long years on the ground level.

Post-Independence Environment and New Roles for Top Bureaucrats

When the IAS was created, it was, unfortunately not made clear that the IAS would have to be different from the ICS. The ICS were not working on behalf of a locally oriented Government put in office on the basis of adult franchise of the Indian population. Undoubtedly, they did perform the tasks of maintaining law and order, collection of land revenues and other taxes, protecting and establishing infrastructure for the use of not only the British industry and trade but also for the corresponding development of the Indian agriculture, trade and industry. Law and order, education, public health, military recruitment, were concomitants of the Anglo-Indian partnership in a model of growth in which everything was, without

doubt focussed on the well-being of the British Empire. Having fulfilled the requirements of these basic parameters, if an ICS officer wanted to go farther for the well-being of the Indian subjects, he had a free hand to go as far as he wanted. Even in this, a British ICS Officer was expected never to forget that he was essentially more than equal to the Indians. The *Mai-Baap* image (under which Government officers were seen as powerful parents) was as real as the non-compromising insistence on political neutrality, integrity and persistent hard work. The easy familiarity between the Sahibs and the coloured Indian disappeared with the mercantilism of the *box-wallahs*. The ICS were never a part of this bonhomie. That is how; they were able to project an image of judiciousness.

Enter the IAS

As soon as India gained Independence, it should have been clear to everybody that the image of the Collector as the *Mai-Baap* would have to be discarded. What is more, a new equation would have to evolve between the political functionaries and the bureaucratic system.

So much had been written about the way India would develop after independence and how the system of governance would have to be under the systemic control of the Parliament, the State Legislatures and also, in some ways, the Panchayati Raj institutions. This obviously was totally different from the system of administration established through the ICS and erstwhile Collectors.

A far sighted post-Independence government should have thought of the basic changes in both the functions and the mindsets required among the IAS bureaucrats. This was not so difficult as far as the newly created IAS were concerned, if they had been given a well thought out policy framework.

However, given the fact that the then subordinate Provincial Civil Service (PCS) and others were able to perform reasonably well immediately after the departure of the ICS, getting them to manage the best they could became an end in itself. This would have been alright if the dangers of allowing these functionaries to get integrated straightaway into the IAS had been realised and if they were treated initially as temporary additions to the newly formed IAS and merged with it only after their reorientation and rigorous retraining. Unfortunately, this did not happen and these gentlemen who had been the most obedient subordinates of the ICS as well as sundry politicians were put in positions, in which some of them influenced the young and impressionable IAS in the business of governance.

In retrospect, it is undeniable that the newly formed government was suffering from a great administrative crisis and therefore, one cannot but sympathise with it for having hastily created an additional workforce. But it is, at least now, with the benefit of hindsight and so many disappointments, the systemic planners should have taken chapters out of the administrative history of Britain to understand how much deliberation has gone, from time to time, not only at the time of creation of the bureaucratic set up but also at fairly regular intervals to examine and evolve measures to keep it in shipshape.

Judging by the standards of the British bureaucracy, the IAS has been a magnificent failure! There is no denying that, generally, the IAS consists of extremely intelligent people. They are sharp, quick, knowledgeable and easy learners. Most of them know what they want out of life, and from the start, they are on the go to achieve what they set out to accomplish. They are not fussy about the fact that other people might perceive them as corrupt, communal, compromising and self-seeking individuals who don't even have any *esprit-de-corps* as a redeeming feature. Even sundry politicians look upon them as tools meant essentially for somehow doing what they want for furthering their interests. Nobody is bothered, whether or not they have incisive knowledge of ground level dynamics: they are not seen as people who can tell what will or will not work on the ground.

How the new administrative system should have been set up

Those working on the drawing boards for creating the new service for India very often had no ideological moorings. When they thought of the future role of the services or of the orientation of Indian development, they tended to think either of the Mughals or of Vikramaditya and Ashoka. However, if those responsible for the setting up the IAS had studied and cogitated on the story of A.O Hume, and understood how and why he stood up for certain democratic and humanitarian values, they would have designed the IAS and the IPS differently. By ignoring his life and struggles in the service of the Indian people, they lost the opportunity of understanding how a person or a group of people formulate their philosophy and their Mission for the setting of goals which guide their actions.

Those responsible for creating the IAS should have emphasised the need for humility among the rank and file of bureaucrats dealing with multidimensional situations, which India exemplifies. Instead, what we have are hierarchies of authoritarian regimes in departments and ministries at the Centre as well as States, where the demand for “consistently praiseworthy” performance by the seniors, has robbed the juniors of the self-esteem to look independently at life around them and reflect on it. In the process, they tend to get shaped to become tools in other people’s hands. They progressively start believing that they are not in the business of learning from their own observations and experiences to go on evolving, enriching altering and systematising a world view of their own. They decide, early in service that given the top-down system in which they have been placed, it would be dangerous to look upon themselves as members of a self-sustaining and interacting system. The system, they conclude, requires whiz kids or lawyers who can deliver whatever the boss, bureaucrat or politician wants of them.

Another thing which the designers of a new service should have emphasised at the outset should have been the absolute imperative of giving the members of the All-India Services emoluments which would have enabled them to live without having worry about how they would finance the minimum establishments required for living in relative dignity at home and also on tour, without sponging on subordinates.

It would be worthwhile remembering that practically every distinguished civil servant had hobbies to keep him sane in the maddening summers without electricity, fans, coolers or air conditioning. As it was, most of the officers sent their families away, either to the hills or abroad to safeguard them from the risk of sunstroke or of sudden transfers. The politicians, deciding on the emoluments of the services did not know of the risks and the cost of dislocation because they never experienced it. That is why they decided to reduce the emoluments of Collectors roughly Rs. 1,000 per month in 1958, as against the emoluments of the ICS Collectors, who drew in the range of around Rs, 2,000-3,000 per month in the nineteenth century. For example, during the seventies and eighties of the 19th Century, A. O. Hume was able to finance (it is incomprehensible now!) the cost of establishing a high school in Humeganj in Etawah from his own resources.

All the issues raised above show that there was a great need for associating the more distinguished among the old and well-respected practical bureaucrats of the day to explain to the youngsters in the IAS and the IPS the essential differences between a competent and honest officer and a yes-man lording over the public. It is known that many of them were alive and some of them came off and on to India. What is being asserted here is that because the decision makers were in a tearing hurry to get the officers they needed immediately, they were long on the theoretical framework and short on the mechanics for operationalising the administrative systems.

The most grievous mistake was to fall into the trap of the members of the old guard vociferously speaking up for the officers of the Provincial Services and the Army Officers on the point of demobilisation, who they argued, were there, waiting to be called and given substantive positions. If they were taken in, there would be no difficulty to fill the hiatus created by the departure of expatriates. It was a situation in which

no one was in a position to look the gift horse in the mouth. The net result was, that on the eve of freedom, most of the people functioning as Collectors were PCS officers, given temporary charge of the districts. These people were quickly created commissars, whose creators had no notion of the manner in which the ICS had evolved the strategy for selecting or training their fledglings.

The constant complaint among the hastily recruited IAS and IPS officers was that they were seldom welcomed by the seniors. In any case, during this phase, emphasis shifted to the fulfilment of the wishes of the powerful politicians and visiting dignitaries, rather than to the learning of the realities on the ground and attending to the difficulties of the man in the street. Therefore, the huge paraphernalia available for touring in the winter and the rainy seasons generally remained unutilised. It would be worth pondering whether many of the systemic problems arose because of poor conceptualisation of the role and the inadequate projections of the nature of the emerging Indian polity.

While laying down the short and long term objectives of the bureaucratic system on the anvil, one could reasonably lay down the following parameters also for providing a cultural milieu to the young recruits:

- Feudalism and indebtedness were powerfully entrenched in rural life;
- Ignorance of the value system essential for dignity and survival of Tribals;
- Absence of commitment to the strategy and a resolve to end casteism and untouchability; and
- Bureaucracy was being established without any ethical or ideological foundations. ❖

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