

Imperative Indian Administrative Reforms: An Impossible Agenda?

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Administrative reform is a global phenomenon. In India, however administrative reform is still not a critical political agenda with its complete understanding, holistic perspective and sense of urgency. The paper studies reforms undertaken by India after its independence, and shows how and why it failed to reform its administration. Formation of strong autonomous local democratic governments, breaking of bureaucracy, sector specific dovetailing of the New Public Management and post- NPM principles are leading towards such administrative reforms. The paper demonstrates how the world over, countries reformed their administration successfully, and which contributed to their development. India, even though administrative functioning is a bottleneck in its progress, has failed to recognize it as a critical national agenda. Existing bureaucratic structure and lack of political ideology and commitment towards administrative reforms are the reasons for failure to reform administration.

Introduction

As Kettle says, if there is any constant in a globalizing world, it is the rapid pace of government change.¹ Post-World War II period witnessed a high point in emergence and expansion of modern states across the world. In the socialist states, the economy was owned and managed by the government. Developing third world societies had confidence in the state. Industrialized societies practised Keynesian economics and expanded welfare programmes.² Even the United States of America, which believed in private entrepreneurship, showed massive expansion of the state's role after the World War II. But in the process, as Gerald Caiden observes, "...government itself became too big, had taken too much upon itself as insurer and guarantor of economy and society, manager of natural and human resources, and sponsor of intellectual and cultural talent, all well intentioned activities but beyond its administrative, political and technical capacity to realize...".³ Thus, the last couple of decades saw emergence of

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¹ Kettle: 2005, p. vii.

² Esman: 1991, p. 457.

³ Caiden: 1991, p. 367.