

GENERALIST AND SPECIALIST IN ADMINISTRATION

Traditionally, the Indian Public Service has been structured on the British pattern of division of service into the higher "administration class and other subordinate technical services". The origin of such dichotomy can be traced to the famous Northcote- Trevelyan Report on the "Organization of the Permanent Civil Service," 1853. This point of view obtained detailed emphasis in the famous Macaulay Report on the Indian Civil Service submitted a year later in 1854. However, with the growth in the functions of government following the acceptance by free India of the goal of creating a welfare socialist society and the increasing complexity of the newly assumed functions, the Trevelyan-Macaulay philosophy has been questioned and challenged seriously during the last ten years or so and has become the subject of debate in our country. The adequacy of this concept has been questioned in Britain as well. Much confusion in this respect arises out of the difficulty in defining with precision the terms 'generalists' and 'specialists'. A generalist may be defined as a public servant who does not have a specialized background, and is easily transferable to any department or branch of government. A generalist has also been defined as a civil servant, who belongs to the managerial class and who is well up in rules, regulations and procedure of administration and, who generally performs POSDCORB functions. (Planning, Organizing, Supervising, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting and Budgeting). On the other hand, by 'specialist' is generally meant a person who has special knowledge or skill in a specific field, e.g. agriculturists, physicians, engineers, educationists, etc. The specialist can easily be distinguished on the basis of his education and training. The Fulton Committee (The Civil Service Committee of Britain, 1966-1968) uses the terms 'specialists' and 'administrators'.

One important characteristic of the public services in India is the superior position of the generalist. By and large, the "policy formulation" and the "consideration" levels in the Central and State Secretariats are manned by the members of the generalist services. Although the technical services constitute about 50 percent of the total strength of Class I Officers, they are generally excluded from holding Secretariat appointments. A good portion of the posts (of Deputy Secretary and above) in the Central Secretariat are held by civil servants in the IAS.

Let us now examine at some length the assumptions underlying the myth of the superiority of the generalists, and see to what extent these remain valid under the existing situation. The first and the foremost of these assumptions is the belief that the high calibre of recruits to the ICS/IAS Services and the wide and varied experience gained as a result of their postings to a diverse variety of jobs, equip these services with

qualities needed for the performance of the senior management level jobs. With the emergence of the Welfare State with emphasis on development administration, the demand for specialized and technical talent has been rising rapidly and the best talent is now being attracted to these technical positions including industry, commerce, banking, insurance and other business. It is, thus, no longer true that the ICS/IAS are the only repository of talent and merit. Even otherwise, there has occurred a big change in the functions of the government, which have not only multiplied in number but have also become very complicated and technical. The needs of contemporary society and the inspirations of the public demand that "civil servants today have to be equipped to tackle the political, scientific, social, economic and technical problems of our time. They have to keep up with the rapid growth of new knowledge and acquire new techniques to apply to it. In short, the Civil Service is no place for the amateur. It must be staffed by men and women who are professionals."

"Another justification for the predominance in the higher administrative position of Services primarily recruited for the general administration, is the facility which this system seems to provide for contact with the grass roots of administration. In other words, the unique qualities of these services is the "district experience. "

This assumption has, however, been challenged on many grounds. In the first place, the question that has been asked is as to what constitutes the "district experience"? Why should the experience in land revenue administration, magistracy and general administration alone be regarded as field experience? The experience at the operation "doing" level can as well be acquired in other departments like agriculture, industry, health or police. " A recent study showed that the average time spent in a district by a direct recruit to the I.A.S. was only about a year and eight months and that for direct recruits the odds appeared to be moving gradually against their holding the post at all during the course of their career. It is being increasingly realized that "district experience" is really not called for in the type of activities now carried on by the Central Government, and that the work of Ministries/ Departments called for continuity of specialization rather than periodic renewal of field experience, in districts. Lastly, generalists charge the specialists of being parochial and narrow-minded. Specialists, according to this view, are prone to display bias and a restricted view of matters. After all, the specialist is one " who knows more and more of less and less" and they quote the authority of Paul Appleby according to whom, "the price of specialization of every kind is parochialism."

The foremost grievance of the specialist service is the discrimination in pay and allowances as between the I.A.S. and their services, and the greater and quicker chances of promotion for the I.A.S. The other

grievance of the specialist services has been that a large majority of top posts in the Union Government and the State Governments are manned by the members of the I.A.S. The position is similar in the case of public enterprises whether of the Central Government or the State Governments.

The Indian Government is fully aware of the problem and a number of steps have already been taken to resolve it. The more important of these are mentioned here:

- Weakening of the Tenure System
- Creation of New Specialist All-India and Central Services
- Appointment of Specialists to Positions of Administrative Responsibility, etc.