

Role of Civil Services In a Democracy - Indian Polity

Role of Civil Services in Democracy

In a democracy, the civil services play an extremely important role in the administration, policy formulation and implementation, and in taking the country forward towards progress and development.

Democracy is an egalitarian principle in which the governed elect the people who govern over them. There are three pillars in a modern democracy:

1. Legislature
2. Executive
3. Judiciary

The civil services form a part of the executive. While the ministers, who are part of the executive, are temporary and are reelected or replaced by the people by their will (through elections), the civil servants are the permanent part of the executive.

- The civil servants are accountable to the political executive, the ministers. The civil services is thus, a subdivision under the government.
- The officers in the civil services form the permanent staff of the various governmental departments.
- They are basically expert administrators.
- They are sometimes referred to as the bureaucracy or also the public service.

Historical Evolution of Civil Services

In India, the idea of a systematic public administration system has been in place since ancient times.

- The Mauryan administration employed civil servants in the name of adhyakshas and others. See more on Mauryan administration.
- Chanakya's Arthashastra reveals that the civil servants were recruited on the basis of merit and excellence and that they had a stringent investigation method.
- In the Mughal period, there were state officers who took care of the land revenue system.
- In modern times, the East India Company had a civil service to do their commercial activities.
- The British government in India established the civil services chiefly with the aim of strengthening their control over their Indian possessions.
- In 1800, Lord Wellesley, the Governor-General of India from 1798 to 1805, established the College of Fort William where every worker of the Company was sent for a three-year course. They were taught international law, ethics, Indian history and eastern languages, etc.
- The East India Company College was established in Hertfordshire, near London to train members of the civil service.
- In post-independence India, the civil service was reorganised.
- During the British Raj, law and order enforcement, and collection of revenue were the major concerns of civil services officers.
- After independence, when the government assumed the role of a welfare state, civil services acquired an important role in executing national and state policies of welfare and planned development.

Importance of the Civil Services

1. The civil service is present all over India and it thus has a strong binding character.

2. It plays a vital role in effective policy-making and regulation.
3. It offers non-partisan advice to the political leadership of the country, even in the midst of political instability.
4. The service gives effective coordination between the various institutions of governance, and also between different departments, bodies, etc.
5. It offers service delivery and leadership at different levels of administration.

Functions of Civil Services

- **Basis of Government:** There can be no government without administrative machinery.
- **Implementing Laws & Policies:** The civil services are responsible for implementing laws and executing policies framed by the government.
- **Policy Formulation:** The civil service is chiefly responsible for policy formulation as well. The civil service officers advise ministers in this regard and also provides them with facts and ideas.
- **Stabilising Force:** Amidst political instability, the civil service offers stability and permanence. While governments and ministers can come and go, the civil services is a permanent fixture giving the administrative setup a sense of stability and continuity.
- **Instruments of Social Change & Economic Development:** Successful policy implementation will lead to positive changes in the lives of ordinary people. It is only when the promised goods and services reach the intended beneficiaries, a government can call any scheme successful. The task of actualising schemes and policies fall with the officers of the civil services.
- **Welfare Services:** The services offer a variety of welfare schemes such as providing social security, welfare of weaker and vulnerable sections of society, old-age pensions, poverty alleviation, etc.
- **Developmental Functions:** The services perform a variety of developmental functions like promoting modern techniques in agriculture, promoting industry, trade, banking functions, bridging the digital divide, etc.
- **Administrative Adjudication:** The civil services also perform quasi-judicial services by settling disputes between the State and the citizens, in the form of tribunals, etc.

Constitutional Provisions Related to Civil Services

- As per Articles 53 and 154, the executive power of the Union and the States vests in the President or Governor directly or through officers subordinate to him. These officers constitute the **permanent civil service** and are governed by **Part XIV of the Constitution** (Services under the Union and States (Article 308-323)).
- **Government of India (Transaction of Business) Rules:** The manner in which the officers are required to help the President or Governor to exercise his/her executive functions is governed by these Rules.
- Article 311 – Dismissal, removal or reduction in rank of persons employed in civil capacities under the Union or a State.
- Article 312 – All India Services.

Accountability of a Civil Servant

The civil servants are responsible to the ministers of the departments in which they serve. The ministers are accountable to the people through the Parliament or State Legislatures, and the civil servants are accountable to the ministers. They should ideally serve the elected government of the day, as governmental policies are the functions of the civil services. However, an impartial civil servant is also accountable to the Constitution of India on which he has taken an oath of allegiance.

Problems Affecting Civil Services Today

- Lack of professionalism and poor capacity building.
- Ineffective incentive system that does not reward the meritorious and upright civil servants.
- Rigid and outmoded rules and procedures that do not allow civil servants to exercise individual judgement and perform efficiently.
- Lack of accountability and transparency procedure, with no adequate protection for whistle-blowers.
- Political interference causing arbitrary transfers, and insecurity in tenures.
- An erosion in ethics and values, which has caused rampant corruption and nepotism.
- Patrimonialism (a form of governance in which all power flows directly from the leader).
- Resistance to change from the civil servants themselves.

How the Indian civil service is different from the American model?

In India, the bureaucracy or civil services is permanent and does not change with the government. The recruitment is based on merit and through competitive exams. This is in contrast to the system followed in the US, where civil servants, especially in the higher echelons, change with the government. This is called the **spoils system** where people who are close to the government of the day get posts.

UPSC Questions related to Role of Civil Services in a Democracy

Which is the highest post in civil services?

In India, the highest ranking civil servant is the Cabinet Secretary. He/she is ex-officio Chairman of the Civil Services Board; the chief of the Indian Administrative Service and head of all civil services.

Who introduced the system of civil services?

While Warren Hastings introduced the system, it was Lord Cornwallis who modernised and reformed it. Cornwallis is hence called 'Father of civil service in India'.

What are the types of civil services?

There are three categories of civil services in India, namely, the All India Services (IAS, IFS, IPS), the Central Civil Services, and the State Civil Services.

What are the 24 civil services?

The posts one can get into on clearing the civil services exam are given in detail in this link:

<https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/civil-services-post-one-may-get-into-upsc/>

