

Unit 50. Role of Civil Services in a Democracy



Indian state has three typical branches – Executive, Legislature and Judiciary. Executive is responsible to Legislature while Legislature is responsible to people. By Executive here we meant Political Executive – the ministers. Political executives are not permanent, and in Indian scenario, since the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies are elected only for 5 years, there is chance of change in the political executives, every five years. But there is another line of executives too in India, a permanent one. They are called Civil Servants. Civil Servants are accountable to ministers (political executives).

Difference between Indian Civil Services and American Civil Services

Though civil servants are there in almost all countries, the selection and nature of job differs. The main difference between Indian and US system are as below:

- Indian Civil Services are permanent. US Civil Servants in higher echelons change with government (spoils system).
- Indian system is based on merit, judged through competitive exams. US system, at-least in higher civil services, is given as a reward for favors done to the political executives.

Advantages of Indian Civil Services System



1. Chance of nepotism and corruption in spoils system. Indian system is designed to be impartial and permanent.
2. A permanent civil service provides continuity and develops expertise as well as institutional memory for effective policy making.
3. A permanent executive looks at long term social pay-offs. (Political executives often look at short term gains).
4. Brings uniformity in public administration and also acts as a unifying force.
5. A permanent civil service like any other reputable profession is likely to evolve over time an ethical basis for its functioning.

Accountability of a civil servant

- In any democracy, Ministers are responsible to the people through Parliament and therefore the civil servants have to be accountable to the Minister.
- However, an impartial civil service is responsible not only to the government of the day but to the Constitution of the land to which they have taken an oath of loyalty.
- At the same time, implementing the policies of the duly elected government is a core function of civil servants.
- Civil Servants (Eg: Secretaries) have the constitutional mandate to advice the political executives (ministers).

Role of Civil Services in Indian Democracy

- Give advice to political executives.
- Assist the political executive to: (a) Formulate policy (b) Implement policy.

NB: Qualities expected from Civil Servants: Knowledge, experience, understanding of public affairs etc.

Constitutional Provisions Related to Civil Services in India

- In terms of **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 (Allocation of Business) Rules:** Work is allocated among Ministers as per the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules.
- **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 the Government of India (Transaction of Business) Rules.
- Article 308 – Definition of state.
- Article 310 – Tenure of office of persons serving the Union or a State.
- 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.
- Article 313 – Transitional Provisions.

Sample Questions Related to ‘Role of Civil Services in a Democracy’ : For GS2 or GS4

- Qn 1: A healthy working relationship between Ministers and civil servants is critical for good governance. Comment:
- Qn 2: The phenomenon of ‘politicisation of the civil service’ is rising in India. Comment.
- Qn 3: The relationship between the Secretary and the Minister should be organic. Comment.

