



Actions That Corrode The Steel Frame of India

Context

A letter war between two sets of retired public officials (civil servants, judges and army officers), concerning the prevailing political and social situation in the country, has been widely reported in the media.

Relevance

GS-II: Important Aspects of Governance, Transparency and Accountability, E-governance-applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; Citizens Charters, Transparency & Accountability and institutional and other measures. Role of Civil Services in a Democracy.

Dimensions of the Article

- Role of Civil Service
- Deterioration in the Standard of Civil Service
- Norms and values associated with a Civil Servant
- Way Forward

Role of Civil Service

- It is the police and magistracy, judicial courts and other regulatory agencies — not politicians — which have been authorized and empowered by law to take preventive action against potential troublemakers, enforce the laws relating to criminal, economic and other offences, and maintain public order.



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- In mature democracies, self-respecting public officials normally discharge their constitutional and legal responsibilities with honesty, integrity and their own conscience, firmly resisting the dictates of the vested interests.

Deterioration in the Standard of Civil Service

- The deterioration in standards was very visible during the National Emergency declared in 1975.
- The civil services, like other institutions including the judiciary, just caved in; the trend might have accelerated over the years.
- Now, no one even talks of civil service neutrality.
- Earlier, during communal or caste riots, the Administration focused on quelling the disturbances and restoring peace in the affected locality, without ever favouring one group over the other.
- Now, there are allegations of local officers taking sides in a conflict.
- A civil servant's pliant and submissive behaviour means an end to civil service neutrality and the norms and values that this trait demands, does not seem to bother either the political or bureaucratic leadership.
- Despite the protection and safeguards in Article 311 of the Constitution, politicians could have a civil servant placed in an inconvenient position or even punish him.

Norms and values associated with a Civil Servant

- Norms: The norms that define neutrality are: independence of thought and action; honest and objective advice; candour and 'speaking truth to power'.
- Values: Associated with these norms are the personal values that a civil servant cherishes or ought to cherish, namely, self-respect, integrity, professional pride and dignity.
- All these together contribute to the enhancement of the quality of administration that benefits society and the people.

Way Forward

Constitutional morality is not a natural sentiment," wrote B.R. Ambedkar, the architect of the Constitution and added, "It has to be cultivated. We must realise that our people have yet to learn it. Democracy in India is only a top dressing on an Indian soil which is essentially



undemocratic.”

Source – *The Hindu*

Legacy IAS Academy