

P R E F A C E

The past two decades have witnessed significant momentum changes in the meaning of development and the focus of development administration. Although scholars are busily engaged in evolving a new alternative paradigm of development that could be relevant for Third world Countries like India, there is little doubt that development transformation has undergone significant shifts from the earlier Western, modernization paradigm of industrialization and 'trickle down' urbanization, centralization, bureaucratization,

concentration and mechanization. While dependency theories and the 'modes of Production' debate effectively demolished the ethnocentric Western model, neither the neo-Marxist theories nor the alternative political economy approach could resolve many of the intricate riddles of the development puzzle. Notwithstanding the belated realization of the multi-dimensional, multilinear character of the developmental process and the qualitative shift in the developmental goals, public policies in most Third world Countries, especially in this country, have demonstrated a pathetic lack of sensitivity to and awareness of the changing scenario. Similarly, although development administration has radically changed in its character and emphasis, from a conspiratorial theory to its current concern with agriculture and rural development, decentralization, community-based resource management, participatory democracy, equitable distribution and social justice, basic needs of the poor, poverty alleviation and development of non-bureaucratic organizational forms the Indian situation continues to display confusion and uncertainty of the earlier years in respect of perception and commitment, policy formulation and implementation. Official policy still gropes in the dark between the old bureaucratic-management approach and the new community-management approach. There is a surprising lack of heightened sensitivity to the imperatives of rural development and welfare of the poorer masses, and a lack of responsiveness to the political process. It has become increasingly evident that despite the changes in its thrust, development process continues to be controlled by an insensitive, change-resistant bureaucracy that has signally failed to adapt itself to a new culture of management of development. Poor management and ineffective administration have been an endemic source of trouble for India's development performance, and in a country where

agriculture is the principal source of livelihood for the millions living in the rural areas who are haunted by abject poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition and uncivilized existence amidst privileged pocket of affluence and crash consumerism in the metropolis, administration has not been able to adapt itself to the goals and processes of rural development. While a number of comprehensive package programmes for rural development have been launched over the decades, Indian bureaucracy has persistently lagged behind in its capability to perform the instrumental, catalyst role for decentralised, community-based, participatory rural development. Consequently, the policies, programmes, projects and activities within the scheme of Indian development administration have either failed to realise the desired goals, or have merely touched the fringe of the problem. The administrative system, including the structure and organisation of bureaucracy that is centralised, overstaffed and predominantly generalist, the procedures that still exude the Weberian attributes and are a legacy of the Colonial Past, and behaviour-patterns that fail to take cognizance of the realities of the political process and the emerging ethos and culture, has woefully lagged behind in its intended task of managing development. It has not developed the perception, the commitment and the desire to cope with the challenges coming from the environment. Public policy in India since independence has been seized of the grim situation, and has sought to introduce a number of measures to reform the administrative system so that it acquired adequate capability to respond to the challenges of development. But since administrative development can not take place in a vacuum, in the absence of socio-economic and political development, such efforts had proved, in the logic of things, to be merely incremental, peripheral and marginal in their impact on implementation of developmental programmes and policies. The A.R.C. signalled a momentous breakthrough in the process of administrative development in India, but

even this laudable effort has proved to be of no consequence, mainly on account of an inept and misdirected political leadership that wanted to continue and perpetuate the colonial legacy of a bureaucratic administration in the garb of a representative democracy having a federal state structure and a parliamentary governmental form. Developmental bureaucracy, or a decentralised administration for rural development, has remained a mirage even to this day, despite a plethora of public policy statements and periodical exercises in what is known as administrative reform.

Against this backdrop and scenario, and within the broad framework outlined above, the present dissertation seeks not only to evaluate the various rural development programmes adopted by the national government in India since independence, but also to identify the specific and rather peculiar problems of the Indian bureaucracy in its organisational structure, procedural bottlenecks, operational dysfunctionalities and behavioural oddities, in its avowed task of management of development, and, based on this diagnostic exercise, to assess the measures for reforming it in consonance with the swift-changing, dynamic environment of the Indian political system. On the basis of a careful micro-level empirical investigation carried out in two northern districts of West Bengal which are still in the stage of underdevelopment, the study seeks to unfold the perceptions and attitudes of the component parts of the environment towards administrative development, in the expectation that the results of such investigation and the specific findings of the study, could offer fresh insights and valuable inputs to the public policy-makers in India in their future policy prescriptions. The relevance and significance of the study, and its practical significance in the present stage of India's development-efforts, cannot be gainsaid.

The study has been divided into six broad chapters which include several sections and sub-sections covering the

specific dimensions of the study. Chapter 1 introduces the study with a statement of the problem, a broad theoretical framework, the objectives of the study, the research questions and an overview of the literature on the subject of research. In the next chapter [Chapter 2], the methodological aspect of the study is discussed in detail, including the specific methods and techniques, the setting, the coverage, the schedule and the sample drawn from the universe of study. A brief profile of the two districts is also included in this Chapter. Chapter 3 provides a detailed analysis of rural development in India in its historical perspective. Chapter 4 makes a detailed study of various reform measures undertaken since independence for bringing about the required changes in the administrative system, along with an evaluation of their positive contribution to the cause of administrative development. Chapter 5 analyses the data collected from the field pertaining to the various dimensions of rural development administration. In Chapter 6, which is the concluding chapter, all the findings of the study have been summarised. The Chapter also makes the concluding observations drawn on the basis of the findings along with some suggestions having implications for policy-making and further research.

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