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# UNIT 4 EVOLUTION OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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## 4.0 OBJECTIVES

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This unit aims at explaining the evolution of Public Administration as a significant area of inquiry. After studying this unit you should be able to:

- appreciate and summarise the importance of the study of the evolution of Public Administration
- to distinguish between different traditions of academic inquiry in Public Administration; and
- identify and explain the different phases in the growth of the study of Public Administration.

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## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

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In this Unit we shall trace the historical evolution of Public Administration as a field of inquiry and also explain different traditions in the development of Public Administration. Broadly, we have identified three traditions, viz. Absolutist, Liberal Democratic and Marxian, in the evolution of Public Administration. The classification is done for educative purposes rather than for the purpose of explaining their empirical implications. The analytical frame, we hope, will enable you to have a broad perspective on the developments in Public Administration considered in terms of the impulses, ideological or otherwise behind them. This unit introduces you to diverse traditions in the practice and theory of Public Administration. Such a diversity has arisen mainly because of differences in not only the history, culture and levels of development at various societies but also the impulses shaping them at different times. Before discussing them in detail, let us briefly consider the importance of the study of the evolution of Public Administration.

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## 4.2 WHY STUDY EVOLUTION OF THE SUBJECT?

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There have been few studies in the evolution of Public Administration, although its importance has been widely recognised. A possible reason is the erroneous impression that

the past developments are of little consequence to the present ones with which we are most actively concerned. But the question is whether the past can be separated from the present without rendering our understanding of the present incomplete and inadequate.

Evolution refers to a gradual unfolding of development of things in the course of time, when the past, present and future are considered in terms of a continuum, the study of the past or of history becomes all the more significant. The past not only foreshadows the present but also serves as its matrix. History, in the words of E.H. Carr, is an unending dialogue between the past and the present. In this sense, the study of history has a contemporary relevance. Indeed, it is necessary for the understanding of the contemporary status of the subject and the critical issues therein, the genesis of which may be found in the past. There is much truth in the saying that 'a phenomenon can be understood only in a historical context'. Again, the study of different phases and traditions in the evolution of Public Administration may also help in applying the 'lessons' or the indicators of the past to the consideration of the development of the subject in the present. Broadly, the study of evolution fulfils both theoretical and pragmatic purposes. From the theoretical point of view, it helps to locate the subject in a broader frame of reference and from the practical point of view it facilitates the use of the knowledge of the past to further the development of the subject in the present.

**Check Your Progress 1**

Note : i) Use the space below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with those at the end of the unit.

1) Describe the significance of study of evolution of Public Administration.

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### 4.3 ABSOLUTIST TRADITIONS

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In this section we shall discuss the absolutist tradition which antedates the other two—Liberal Democratic and Marxian. Absolutist tradition refers to administrative traditions of absolute monarchical regimes, where all powers are concentrated in the monarchy. The earliest work concerning it is Kautilya's **Arthashastra**, the most important work on Public Administration in ancient India. We confine our discussion to the Indian tradition mainly for two reasons. Firstly, sufficient information is not available on the absolutist administrative traditions of other Asian societies. Secondly, the students of administration should be acquainted with their own traditions in the field of Public Administration.

According to tradition, Kautilya, also known as Chanakya and Vishnugupta, was the Prime Minister of Chandragupta Maurya (322-298 B.C.), who founded the Maurya Dynasty of Magadha (Bihar). Kautilya's treatise known as **Arthashastra** may be regarded as an ancient Indian text-book of practical politics. It, according to some, ranks in importance with **Manusmriti** and **Kamasashtra** and forms a triad with them in dealing with the three imperatives of the social philosophy of that time—**Dharma, Kama, Artha**. It deals mainly with the Science Polity, which, according to Kautilya, is a combination of Science of Wealth and Science of Government. [ **Vittasastra** (Economics) and **Dandanithi** (Statecraft)]. To Kautilya, finances provide the sinews of government and financial considerations are paramount in the government's activities. Thus, his treatise adopts the political economy approach to the understanding of the problems of governance. H.V.R. Jyengar described **Arthashastra** "as an exceptionally able dissertation both on the aims of the State as well as on practical means by which these aims can be achieved". **Arthashastra** is both an analytical and a perspective document revealing amazing perception and mastery of detail.

**Kautilya's Arthashastra** mainly discusses three aspects of the science of Public Administration, viz. the principles of Public Administration, the machinery of Government

and the management of personnel. The principles of administration are not explicitly dealt with in **Arthashastra**. They are implied by the functions of the monarch, ministers, etc. as detailed in it. The machinery of Government as described in the **Arthashastra** is mainly related to the monarch, his relations with ministers, etc. The problems of higher level personnel receive greater attention than the lower level functionaries in **Arthashastra**.

Kautilya spelt out the importance of the science of Public Administration. According to Kautilya, an administrator can adopt the art of Public Administration only if he is conversant with the science of Public Administration. So it is necessary for the King, the Crown Prince, the High Priest and the ministers to be conversant with the science of Administration. He emphasised the principles of authority, obedience and discipline as being central to the administration of the state. He considered principles like division of work, hierarchy and coordination important to the mechanism of internal organisation. Further, Kautilya is, perhaps, the earliest known thinker to recognise the importance of statistics in administration.

Kautilya made a systematic study of the society and did not blindly accept the current views based on faith and tradition. Ancient Hindus held that the Vedas constitute the sole source of law. But Kautilya laid down four distinct sources of law, namely, sacred scriptures, the rules laid down in **Arthashastra**, customs and edicts of kings. Each of these he considers more authoritative than the one preceding it. He explicitly states that when the sacred law is in conflict with the corporal law the latter should prevail. **Arthashastra** is secular in its tenor and puts politics in command over religion. According to Kautilya, religious considerations should not outweigh political considerations. The King according to him, should strive and maintain the stability of the State and increase his power and material resources by policy or subterfuge. To this end he even proposed an elaborate system of recruiting spies and training them. Some of these propositions of Kautilya are termed Machiavellian. Here it is interesting to note the observations of H.V.R. Iyengar, who said that "Kautilya was honest and stated frankly what today is hidden under dubious veil of secrecy".

Kautilya's 'Ideal State' was something like a modern Welfare State under an all powerful ruler. He clearly required the State to provide for the maintenance of children, women, the old, the infirm and the disabled. The State was to run agricultural farms, help the artisans, and exploit the forest wealth and mineral resources for the benefit of the people at large. Indeed, the basics of 'Welfarism' can be traced in Kautilya's **Arthashastra**.

Kautilya advocated a strong centralised authority vested in the monarchy. As pointed out by N.R. Inamdar, "the principles governing the democratic Public Administration are in many respects different from the principles underlying a monarchical Public Administration described in **Arthashastra**, as the sources and the configurations of authority in the two systems are different". The administrative system as discussed in **Arthashastra** centres on the king. His orders are unquestionable. His interests are supreme. He is the source of authority for all institutions. The fading away of the monarchical form led to other traditions to explain and understand the administrative systems in democratic societies. However, it should be noted that the traditions of Public Administration as established by **Arthashastra** are significant for its emphasis on the Science of Public Administration and systematic analysis of the art of governance.

**Check Your Progress 2**

Note : i) Use the space below for your answer.  
 ii) Check your answer with those at the end of the unit.

1) Explain Kautilya's views on Public Administration.

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## 4.4 LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC TRADITIONS

Traditionally, the origins of Public Administration as a separate area of inquiry are traced to Woodrow Wilson's essay, *The Study of Administration*, published in 1887. His essay marks the beginning of systematic investigation into the field of Public Administration. Since then the study of the subject passed through various phases, each phase characterised by a particular paradigmatic approach. Broadly, seven phases are identified for understanding the evolution of the subject in the broad paradigm of liberal democracy. Let us briefly discuss each one of them.

### 4.4.1 Politics—Administration Dichotomy Approach

Woodrow Wilson, the father of modern Public Administration, considered politics and administration as separate processes and attempted to conceptually distinguish between the two areas of study. A similar attempt was made by Frank Goodnow, another exponent of the dichotomy approach who observed that "politics has to do with policies or expressions of state while administration has to do with the execution of these policies". This distinction is made between policy making and policy execution. Policy making is regarded as the realm of politics and execution as the realm of Public Administration.

Further, politics and Public Administration are differentiated on the basis of their institutional locations. The location of politics is identified with the legislature and the higher echelons of government where major policy-decisions would be made and the larger questions of allocation of values decided upon. The location of administration on the other hand is identified with the executive arm of government—the bureaucracy. The processes of administration, it was argued, have a certain regularity and concreteness about them, which can be successfully investigated. Thus it is possible to develop a science of Administration.

### 4.4.2 Structural Approach

This approach is marked by the tendency to reinforce the idea of politics—administration dichotomy and to evolve a value-free 'Science of Management'.

The 'Public' aspects of Public Administration was virtually dropped at this stage and the focus was almost wholly on economy and efficiency. The questions of 'value' were not considered important to the new science of Administration. Politics as practised by the politicians was considered irrelevant. Scientific Management for the efficient handling of the 'business' of administration became the focus of interest. Principles of management were worked out as readymade aids to practitioners. The administrative practitioners and the business schools joined hands to emphasise the mechanistic aspect of management unaffected by the predilections of politicians and the failings of human beings.

The approach emphasised the structure of the organisation. Structure is a device through which human beings working in an organisation are assigned tasks and related to one another. It is believed that the effective functioning of the organisation depends upon the structure that a group of human beings build and operate. The structural approach was criticised for the ambiguity of its principles, absence of scientific validity and its mechanistic approach to human problems.

### 4.4.3 Human Relations Approach

The Hawthorne experiments pioneered a movement which came to be known as the Human Relations Approach to management. Its impact on Public Administration was felt much more widely in the postwar period than before. This approach to organisational analysis drew attention to the formation and effect of work groups in the organisation, the force of informal organisation in the formal setup, the phenomena of leadership and conflicts and cooperation among groups in the organisational setting. In short, the human relations approach brought out the limitations of the machine concept of organisation in 'Scientific Management' thought. By drawing attention to the social and psychological factors of work situation, it underlined the importance of the "human side of the enterprise".

The social psychologist has extended the concern of human relationists by bringing in additional knowledge about the sensitivity to human components. It is aimed at bringing about: (1) greater organisational productivity or effectiveness, and (2) greater human

happiness and increased self-realisation. Prominent writers advocating this approach include Abraham Maslow, Douglas McGregor, Rensis Likert and Chris Argyris.

The human relations approach has been criticised for its manipulative orientation. It is alleged that the aim of the movement is to manipulate the man in organisation to achieve higher productivity. It is also criticised for ignoring the institutional and social system variable in understanding the organisation.

#### 4.4.4 Behavioural Approach

Herbert Simon's 'Administrative Behaviour' is a critique of the older Public Administration. More importantly, it sets forth the rigorous requirements of scientific analysis in Public Administration. Simon's conclusion about some of the classical 'Principles', was that they were unscientifically derived and were "no more than proverbs". He rejected the politics-administration dichotomy; and at the same time brought in the perspective of logical positivism for the study of policy-making and the relation of means and ends. Reflecting the perspectives and methodology of behaviouralism in psychology and social psychology, **Administrative Behaviour** pleaded for the enforcement of scientific rigour in Public Administration. The substantive focus was on "decision-making", and as Simon insisted, "If any 'theory' is involved, it is that decision-making is the heart of administration, and that the vocabulary of administrative theory must be derived from the logic and psychology of human choice".

Simon's approach provided an alternative definition of Public Administration, and widened the scope of the subject by relating it to Psychology, Sociology, Economics and Political Science. In the development of the 'discipline' he identified two mutually supportive streams of thought. One was engaged in the development of a pure science of administration which called for a good grounding in social psychology; and the other in the development of a broad range of values and in working out prescriptions for public policy. The second approach was, in Simon's view, analytically far-ranging. It would imply the assimilation of the whole of Political Science and Economics and Sociology as well as Public Administration. Thus Public Administration, he feared, might lose its identity in the second approach. But he favoured the co-existence of both the streams of thought for the growth and development of the discipline. As he said, "there does not appear to be any reason why these two developments in the field of Public Administration should not go side by side, for they in no way conflict or contradict. But the workers in this field must keep clearly in mind in which area, at any given time, they propose to work".

#### 4.4.5 Development Approach

The ecological approach to the study of administration originated in the wake of the emergence of the Third World and increasing realisation of irrelevance of most of the western organisation theories to the study of administration. To quote Robert Dahl, "The study of Public Administration inevitably must become a much more broadly based discipline, resting not on a narrowly defined knowledge of techniques and processes, but rather extending to the varying historical, sociological, economic and other conditioning factors..."; This suggestion has been taken up as a challenge and efforts have been made in the study of Public Administration in the developing countries in a bid to "establishing propositions about administrative behaviour which transcend national boundaries". Such efforts have given rise to Comparative Public Administration and Development Administration.

#### 4.4.6 Public Policy Approach

The Social Sciences' general concern for social engineering has resulted in the laying of emphasis on public policy. The study of Public Administration has also been influenced by the public policy perspective. The abandonment of politics-administration dichotomy made the public policy approach agreeable to administrative analysis.

Evidence from the practical world of administration has brought out the criteria of a close nexus between politics and administration. As governments seek to formulate...

#### 4.4.7. Political Economy Approach

Another development in the study of Public Administration is brought about by the adoption of the political economy approach to the analysis of administrative problems. This is associated with the moving of Political Science closer to Economics in the interest of greater theoretical coherence and better policy guidance. Economists like Anthony Downs and Gordon Tullock have gone over the boundary by experimenting with the application of economic methods and models to political problems. Thus Public Administration as a branch of Political Science and on its own has moved towards a liaison with Economics.

The liberal democratic tradition in the evolution of Public Administration as described above shows that, starting with an assertion of independent identity, it has moved towards the assimilation of ideas, methods and techniques of different Social Science disciplines. Thus the scope of the discipline seems to be broadening while the question of its identity remains unanswered.

#### Check Your Progress 3

Note :i) Use the space below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with those given at the end of the unit.

1) Explain different phases in the evolution of Public Administration in Liberal Democratic Traditions.

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### 4.5 A CHART INDICATING THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN VARIOUS APPROACHES

Politics-Administration Dichotomy Approach	Structural Approach	Human Relations Approach	Behavioural Approach
(1) Politics and administration are distinct.	(1) A value-free Science of Management.	(1) Emphasis on the human side of the enterprise.	(1) Deals with the "inside" human being with a focus on his values and rationality.
(2) Politics is concerned with policy making, administration with execution of policy.	(2) The focus is on economy and efficiency.	(2) Brings out the limitation of the machine concept of organisation.	(2) Decision-making is considered to be the heart of the administration.
(3) The location of politics is legislature and the Cabinet; the location of administration — the executive arm of the government.	(3) "Public" aspect of Public Administration was dropped.	(3) Emphasis on the social and psychological factors of work situations.	(3) Widens the scope of the subject by relating it to Psychology, Sociology etc.
(4) A value-free Science of Management.	(4) Emphasis on the structure.	(4) Deals with the relationship among the people working in organisation.	
Development Approach	Public Policy Approach	Political Economy Approach	
(1) Emphasis on the study of the developmental aspect of the administration.	(1) Emphasis on Public policy.	(1) Emphasis on the application of economic methods and models of political problem.	
(2) Emphasis on historical, socio-economic, political factors which condition development.	(2) With the formulation and implementation of welfare programmes, policy study assumes greater significance.	(2) Emphasis on the Public Administration's closer inter-relationship and interaction with politico-economic policies.	

## 4.6 MARXIAN TRADITIONS

The October Revolution of 1917 generated debate among the Marxists on the role of bureaucracy in Russia. But the Marxist interest in the bureaucracy, organisation and management became pronounced only in the decade following the Second World War and developed in a number of directions.

We have to go back to Marx, to understand the classical Marxist view of bureaucracy. Although Marx has not paid much attention to the concept of bureaucracy, his views on bureaucracy and its relation to the power structure of the society found in his major works provide an important clue to the understanding of the later developments in the Marxist thought on bureaucracy. His ideas on bureaucracy figure mainly in his work, 'The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.' His ideas about bureaucracy can be understood when considered within the general framework of his theory of class conflict, the crisis of capitalism, and the emergence of communism. In the wider context of class struggle Marx regards bureaucracy as an instrument of the dominant ruling class, promoting its particular interests. Its existence and development thus have a transient and parasitic character. From this point of view bureaucracy and further bureaucratisation become unavoidable in a society divided into classes. Marx envisaged that with the abolition of the classes, the State and its bureaucracy would 'wither away'. The "withering away" of the bureaucracy would mean its gradual absorption into the society as a whole. Thus instead of having an oppressive structure, Marx visualised that in a Communist society, the functions of the bureaucracy would be taken over by the members of the society themselves. The administrative tasks shedding their exploitative character, would come to mean administration of things and not of people. This philosophic stance of Marx has had a great influence on his followers as well as on his critics.

The October Revolution of 1917 in Russia and the establishment of socialist government in many countries of the world in subsequent years led to experimentation with Marxian ideas. There has been in the Socialist world a proliferation of bureaucracy and a growing tendency to apply Western management techniques. Lenin viewed the strengthening of the centralised bureaucracy in Post-Revolutionary Russia as an indication of the immaturity of socialism and the inadequate development of forces of production. Lenin like Marx considered it a transitional phenomenon. In contrast, the critics of the system have put forward theories regarding the bureaucracy as a "New Class", i.e. a newly emerged class in Soviet Union and other socialist countries ruling in the name of proletariat.

It is indisputable that Marxian studies of bureaucracy, its organisation and management have added a new dimension of the study of Public Administration and helped to develop it. The attempts of Stewart Clegg and David Dunkerly, Nicos Mouzelis, Braverman, and many others to build a radical organisation theory have led to some significant advances in the study of Public Organisation. Indeed, the Marxian traditions have placed the study of Public Administration in the wider perspective of social transformation.

### Check Your Progress 4

Note : i) Use the space below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with those given at the end of the unit.

1) Explain Marx's views on bureaucracy.

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