Working of the Government of India's Administrative Machinery: Challenges and Solutions

Anil Daulat Rajguru, L.L.M, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj University, Panvel, Navi Mumbai
&
(Supervisor) Dr. S.P. Mishra, Head Of Department (Law), Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj University, Panvel, Navi Mumbai.

Published on: 1st June 2025

Abstract

India, the world's largest democracy, operates through a vast administrative machinery that forms the cornerstone of policy implementation, service delivery, and regulatory enforcement. A robust, transparent, and accountable administrative framework is vital for democratic integrity and development. Despite significant constitutional and legislative progress, challenges such as corruption, political interference, and systemic inefficiencies continue to undermine the administrative apparatus. This paper delves into the evolution of Indian governance, the structural framework of its administrative machinery, and identifies the contemporary challenges along with pragmatic reforms—grounded in legal jurisprudence and public policy recommendations.

Keywords: Constitution, civil services, judicial oversight, federalism in India, grassroots democracy, digital India

Introduction

The legitimacy of any democracy lies in the efficiency and responsiveness of its governance system. India's democratic governance is premised on the principles of transparency, accountability, and service delivery. The administrative structure, derived from colonial frameworks and adapted under the Indian Constitution, ensures the implementation of laws and policies designed to promote welfare and justice. Public administration operates across three tiers—central, state, and local self-governments—ensuring that governance is not only top-down but also participatory.[1]

As held in *State of Rajasthan v. Union of India*[2], the Supreme Court emphasised the constitutional obligation of states and the Union to cooperate for the effective administration of governance. The judiciary has consistently reiterated the importance of a people-centric approach in public administration.[3]

Historical Evolution of Indian Administrative Machinery

Ancient and Medieval Traditions

The Indian administrative ethos traces its origins to the Vedic period and was refined during the Mauryan and Gupta eras. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* remains a seminal treatise on public administration, advocating a rational and duty-bound governance system. [4] The Mughal era institutionalized bureaucracy through the Mansabdari system, ensuring centralization and hierarchy in administration[5].

Colonial Administration and Legacy

British colonialism reshaped India's administrative landscape through the Indian Civil Service (ICS), which later evolved into the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). Lord Cornwallis, often called the "Father of Civil Service in India," institutionalized bureaucratic principles that emphasized control

---

[1] N.N. Vani, *Indian Government System* (Orient Blackswan 2010).
[2] *State of Rajasthan v. Union of India* (1977) 3 SCC 592
[3] Kautilya, *Arthashastra* (trans R Shamasastry, Mysore Printing Press 1915).
[4] Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals* (Har-Anand Publications 2004).
[5] Ramesh K Arora, *Indian Public Administration: Institutions and Issues* (New Age International 2020).

over participatory governance[6]. The *Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms* (1919) and *Government of India Act* (1935) laid the foundation for a federal governance structure.

Constitutional Framework and Structure

The Indian Constitution, under Articles 52–151 and 308–323, establishes a comprehensive administrative framework. The tripartite division—Legislature, Executive, and Judiciary—ensures separation of powers and administrative accountability[7]. Article 312 provides for the creation of All India Services such as the IAS and IPS, emphasizing merit-based recruitment and service uniformity across states.

Role of Public Service Commissions

The UPSC and State PSCs are constitutionally empowered to ensure transparency and merit in appointments, as reinforced in *T.N. Seshan v. Union of India*[8], where the Supreme Court underscored the independence of constitutional authorities.

Key Functions of Administrative Machinery

1. **Policy Implementation**: Schemes like Ayushman Bharat and PMAY depend heavily on state machinery.
2. **Law and Order Maintenance**: The executive ensures internal security and crisis management.
3. **Infrastructure Provision**: Health, education, and transport are executed through departmental coordination.
4. **Revenue Collection**: Tax and non-tax revenue mechanisms fuel governance.
5. **Public Participation and Grievance Redressal**: Mechanisms like Lok Adalats, RTI, and e-Governance platforms enhance civic inclusion.

Major Challenges to Governance

---

[6] M. Laxmikanth, *Indian Polity* (6th edn, McGraw-Hill Education 2020). Constitutional Framework and Structure
[7] Constitution of India 1950, arts 52–151 and 308–323.
[8] *T.N. Seshan v. Union of India* (1995) 4 SCC 611

1. **Corruption**

Systemic corruption remains a structural impediment. In *Vineet Narain v. Union of India[9]*, the Court mandated institutional autonomy for the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to prevent political misuse. Despite the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013, implementation remains patchy due to political reluctance and procedural loopholes.

2. Political Interference

The administrative neutrality is frequently compromised. In *E.P. Royappa v. State of Tamil Nadu[10]*, the Court acknowledged the erosion of administrative objectivity due to executive arbitrariness. Transfers and appointments often become political tools rather than merit-based processes.

3. **Inefficiency and Bureaucratic Red-Tapism**

Delays in public service delivery often stem from bureaucratic inertia. The *Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2005–2009)* recommended performance-linked incentives and lateral entry to improve public sector productivity[11].

4. **Public Distrust and Lack of Transparency**

The *Right to Information Act, 2005* was hailed as a landmark step. However, the *Anjali Bhardwaj v. Union of India [12]* case highlighted deliberate delays in the appointment of Information Commissioners, undermining the spirit of the Act[13].

5. **Resource Constraints and Training Deficits**

The absence of training and development hinders administrative adaptability. In *Centre for Public Interest Litigation v. Union of India[13]*, the Court criticized the lack of capacity and procedural fairness in resource allocation and policymaking.

Solutions and Reforms in Indian Administrative Governance

---

[9] *Vineet Narain v Union of India* (1998) 1 SCC 226.
[10] *E.P. Royappa v State of Tamil Nadu* (1974) 4 SCC 3.
[11] Second Administrative Reforms Commission, *Ethics in Governance* (Government of India 2007)
[12] *Anjali Bhardwaj v Union of India* WP(C) 11236/2019 (Delhi HC).
[13] *Centre for Public Interest Litigation v Union of India* (2012) 3 SCC 1.

The effectiveness of India's administrative machinery depends on its ability to respond to changing socio-political needs, ensure public trust, and maintain ethical governance. The following reforms and institutional solutions have been recognized as essential to overcoming current challenges and rejuvenating the governance framework.

Strengthening Anti-Corruption Mechanisms

Corruption is perhaps the most corrosive threat to good governance, eroding public trust, misallocating resources, and encouraging impunity. Institutional strengthening of anti-corruption bodies is vital.

1. Empowering Lokpal and Lokayuktas

The *Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013* was envisioned to provide an independent body to investigate corruption allegations against public officials. However, its effectiveness remains hampered by weak institutional autonomy, delays in appointments, and lack of financial independence. Empowering these bodies through guaranteed **budgetary allocation**, independent staff recruitment, and real-time public disclosure mechanisms is critical for institutional credibility.

2. Judicial Oversight of Investigative Agencies

To ensure that bodies like the CBI, Enforcement Directorate, and Anti-Corruption Bureaus function without political interference, **judicial oversight** must be mandated. The case of *Subramanian Swamy v. Manmohan Singh*[14] emphasized the **timely sanction for prosecution** of public servants and directed a structured mechanism for decision-making in corruption cases.

The Supreme Court in *Vineet Narain v. Union of India* [15] also directed the establishment of a supervisory mechanism to prevent governmental misuse of investigative bodies.

B. **Minimizing Political Interference**

Political interference undermines administrative neutrality and promotes a culture of patronage and inefficiency.

---

[14] *Subramanian Swamy v. Manmohan Singh* (2012) 3 SCC 64.
[15] *Vineet Narain v. Union of India* (1998) 1 SCC 226.

1. *Fixed Tenure for Civil Servants*

The Supreme Court in *Prakash Singh v. Union of India*[16] mandated fixed minimum tenures for police officers, and by extension, advocated civil service reforms to **reduce arbitrary transfers**, which often serve political ends. The implementation of Civil Services Boards (CSBs) at both the Union and state levels is meant to institutionalize transfer and promotion mechanisms based on merit and performance.

2. *UPSC and Transparent Recruitment*

Ensuring **merit-based recruitment and promotion** through reforms in UPSC and state PSCs is necessary to insulate the bureaucracy from partisan influence. This includes digitizing the recruitment process, enhancing objectivity in evaluation, and preventing delays in result declaration.

C. **E-Governance Initiatives**

Digital governance tools can revolutionize service delivery, reduce human interface, and enhance transparency.

1. *Digital India and e-Kranti*

The *Digital India* programme has expanded access to online services, reduced leakages, and empowered citizens. Initiatives like **UMANG**, **DigiLocker**, and **e-Hospital** platforms are ensuring last-mile delivery. The *e-Kranti* initiative focuses on electronic delivery of services to every village and panchayat[17].

2. *National e-Governance Plan (NeGP)*

Launched in 2006, NeGP created Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) in areas such as health, education, and agriculture. It brought digital governance to rural India via Common Service Centres (CSCs), which have bridged the urban-rural digital divide[18].

In *Rajbala v. State of Haryana* [19] , the court indirectly recognized the importance of informed citizenry in governance, which digital platforms could significantly enhance.

---

[16] *Prakash Singh v. Union of India* (2006) 8 SCC 1.
[17] Ministry of Electronics & IT, *Digital India Programme* (2022) https://www.digitalindia.gov.in/.
[18] Government of India, *National e-Governance Plan (NeGP)* (MeitY 2011).

D. **Decentralization and Local Empowerment**

India's vast and diverse population necessitates localized governance solutions that can respond quickly and effectively.

1. Implementation of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments

These constitutional amendments institutionalized local self-governments—**Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)** and **Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)**. Despite their constitutional status, many local bodies remain underfunded and dependent on state governments. Strengthening their **fiscal autonomy** and building capacity are essential to decentralized governance[20].

2. Fiscal Federalism and Direct Transfers

The 15th Finance Commission recommended **direct transfers to local bodies**, improving financial inclusion at the grassroots level. Linking allocations to performance metrics can promote efficiency.

E. **Public Accountability Measures**

Effective governance is impossible without mechanisms that enforce accountability and encourage citizen engagement.

1. Social Audits and Jan Sunwais

Initiated by civil society organizations like the *Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS)* in Rajasthan, **social audits** have exposed large-scale corruption in rural employment schemes (e.g., MGNREGA). These tools institutionalize transparency by enabling citizens to **publicly question officials** on fund utilization.[21]

2. Right to Information (RTI)

The *Right to Information Act, 2005* has been instrumental in empowering citizens. However, in cases like *Anjali Bhardwaj v. Union of India*[22], courts have expressed concern over **vacancies in**

---

[19] *Rajbala v. State of Haryana* (2016) 2 SCC 445
[20] Constitution of India 1950, Parts IX and IX-A.
[21] MKSS, 'History of the RTI Movement' (MKSS India) https://mkssindia.org/.
[22] *Anjali Bhardwaj v. Union of India* WP(C) 11236/2019 (Delhi HC).

Information Commissions and lack of compliance. Strengthening RTI enforcement, reducing delays, and digitizing RTI portals can expand its impact.

Conclusion

India's administrative system stands at a critical juncture. Although constitutional safeguards, institutional structures, and policy initiatives provide a strong foundation, the true challenge lies in addressing persistent barriers such as corruption, inefficiency, and political interference. Reforms must be multi-layered, targeting the legal, procedural, technological, and cultural dimensions of governance. Judicial precedents highlight the necessity for institutional independence, transparency, and effective service delivery.

Rebuilding public trust and administrative efficiency necessitates collective political will, legal enforcement, and active citizen engagement. If these reforms are implemented sincerely, they can ensure that India's administrative machinery becomes genuinely people-centric and capable of meeting the aspirations of the world's largest democracy.

Reference List

1. *Subramanian Swamy v Manmohan Singh* (2012) 3 SCC 64.

2. *Vineet Narain v Union of India* (1998) 1 SCC 226.

3. *Prakash Singh v Union of India* (2006) 8 SCC 1.

4. Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY), *Digital India Programme* (Government of India, 2022) https://www.digitalindia.gov.in/ accessed 31 May 2025.

5. Government of India, *National e-Governance Plan (NeGP)* (MeitY, 2011).

6. Constitution of India 1950, Parts IX and IX-A.

7. Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS), 'History of the RTI Movement' https://mkssindia.org/ accessed 31 May 2025.

8. *Anjali Bhardwaj v Union of India* WP(C) 11236/2019 (Delhi HC).

9. *State of Rajasthan v Union of India* (1977) 3 SCC 592.

10. *E.P. Royappa v State of Tamil Nadu* (1974) 4 SCC 3.

11. *Centre for Public Interest Litigation v Union of India* (2012) 3 SCC 1.

12. *Rajbala v State of Haryana* (2016) 2 SCC 445.

13. Ramesh K Arora, *Indian Public Administration: Institutions and Issues* (New Age International 2020).

14. M Laxmikanth, *Indian Polity* (6th edn, McGraw-Hill Education 2020).

15. N N Vani, *Indian Government System* (Orient Blackswan 2010).

16. Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals* (Har-Anand Publications 2004).

17. R Shamasastry (tr), *Kautilya's Arthashastra* (Mysore Printing Press 1915).

18. Second Administrative Reforms Commission, *Ethics in Governance* (Government of India 2007).