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Women in Administration in India

By Jayasheela George

Abstract

Administration is the performance of the executive functions of the state and it differs from legislature and judiciary. In the present research study, administration refers to Managerial view of administration and here the study is on women administrators of All India Services - Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Police Service (IPS) and Indian Forest Service (IFS). Though the services were in existence from the Britishers Period, the entry of women into these services was very late and in two of these services, women got in only after few decades of independence. This article is written based on the primary data collected through a questionnaire and interviews conducted, case studies done, meeting women IAS, IPS and IFS officers, analysing the Civil lists, Police lists and Forest lists of Government of India. It focuses on the position of women in All India Services, the experiences of women officers, their opinion on other women in the services, existing discriminatory factors in the services, the attitude of their male counter parts in services and at home and their satisfaction and happiness with their family life.

Keywords: women in administration, Indian women, Indian Administrative Service

Introduction

Administration is the performance of the executive functions of the state and it differs from legislature and judiciary. It is one of the most important instruments available to the Government to achieve the goals of the nation. In the present study, the term administration refers to public administration that includes the management of affairs of Government at all levels- national, state and local.

In India, Government services are divided into All India Services, Central Services and State Services. In the present research study, administration refers to Managerial view of administration and here the study is on women administrators of All India Services - Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Police Service (IPS) and Indian Forest Service (IFS). All India Services are divided into different cadres based on the states. Some states have a separate cadre where as the union territories and few states have common cadres.

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Women in the Indian Administrative Service

After Independence the first competitive examination for the AISs - IAS and IPS was held in 1948. The monopoly of male existed till 1950 in IAS and only in 1951 the first lady got into IAS. Though the constitution of India ensures equality, the Indian Administrative Service Rules of 1954 was discriminatory and disadvantageous to women as ‘no married women shall be appointed to the service and resign from the service in the event of marriage’. This disqualification and restriction was removed by deleting the very provision from the IAS recruitment Rule in 1972 and married women were allowed to join the service and an additional provision of maternity leave was granted under this recruitment rule.

Analyzing the Civil Lists Published by the Department of Personnel and Training, Government of India depicts that the women’s entry in to IAS is not increasing much and has been fluctuating from time to time. This is corroborated by the random analysis of the data for few years from the Civil list shows that in the year 1951 only one woman got into the service, after ten years that is in the year 1961 also only one woman entered the service. In the last decade that is in the year 2000 only 9 women got into Indian Administrative Service. Moreover in between years also there is an increase and again there is a decrease in the number of women getting into the service and women’s entry is not on the increase every year. In the contemporary period women IAS officers are not debarred from any kind of postings within the service. They are working in all the states and union territories and holding a variety of ranks from senior most to junior most level.

Women in the Indian Police Service

Women were barred from recruitment to IPS till 1971 and in the year 1972 the discriminatory rule was removed and the first woman entered into IPS and the data in the Police Lists published by the Department of Home Affairs shows the less representation of women in IPS. Though numerically they are less in number, a few of them excel in their performance and were honoured with awards and medals.

Women in the Indian Forest Service

The entry of women into IFS was very late, comparing with other All India Service and it was only in the year 1980 the first women got into the service. The Indian Forest Service Civil Lists, the Ministry of Environment and Forest, and the Government of India show that the number of women in the service is very less.

Research methodology

The list of women administrators in Indian Administrative Service, Indian Police Service and Indian Forest Service were taken from the Civil list, Police list and the Forest list published by Government of India. There are 24 state cadres in All India Services, from which a few women administrators representing the different parts of the country were selected for the study using simple random methodology. Among the data collected from a vast sample, only data related to four significant samples were given in this article. An in-depth unstructured interview and observation were used by the researcher as a tool to collect data related to women administrators. The researcher herself met the samples and did the interview with women administrators in their offices, focusing on the areas such as the motivating factors for them to get into the services, the problems they
face at home and office being a woman and the changes they brought out in the administrative system. During the course of interview the administrators further shared information related to the functioning of the administrative system and the changing position of women in administration and other related aspects. The qualitative data is structured and a part of data is presented as it was given by the samples during the interview.

This study brings out the facts related to the position women in administration and reveals that women are equally capable to occupy the top most services of the nation. It is just that women need to come out of the age old traditions and clutches of customs, prove their talents and get into administrative services, make a change in the society and lead the nation towards development. It removes misconception regarding All India Service and suggests measures to increase the entry of women into administrative services. It also provides suggestions regarding women administrators balancing work at home and office. Among many a number of women officers interviewed, four of them are given here, naming them and identifying them “A” to “D” and just a very significant portion on each study is given below.

Madam. “A’’ is an Orissa Cadre Secretary level officer, having a non-service partner, belonging to 70s batch was one among the few to get in to the cadre in the early duration of service.

She says, “It was very difficult days for women to be an AIS officer as practically women did not occupy the top-most position in the initial stages and those services were mostly branded as men’s positions. Now, the situation is changed and the number of woman getting into the services increased considerably. Till 2002 none of the Orissa girls got home cadre and it was only in the year 2003 the first Orissa girl got her home cadre and she was the topper of her batch”.

She further states, “Even though the number of women getting into the services increased over the years, the stereotype ideas of considering women as inferior to men is not changed. Even now, women officers are not preferred for sensitive, crucial, important and heavy money transacting postings”. She explains of the discrimination in postings, “Mostly, politicians do not feel comfortable with lady officers and do not like women to occupy the top-most positions. As such men do not like to share power with women. Moreover, women are not power-oriented and money minded and they do not usually go for political influence or other measures to get plum postings and favours. Men go for these things as they are familiar with the ways and means to achieve the targets. Women do not bother much about the post allotted and they perform their duties and excel in their given postings. Women are streamlined in administrative services even if they are meritorious and competent enough as men have been holding so called plump postings for years together and rarely women get such postings”.

On the attitude of men she states, “even now, the attitude of men is not changed; they still wonder why women have to work as women are not the breadwinners of the family whereas men are in reverse. They fail to understand that women also contribute to family income”.
Madam “B” an IAS officer from Gujarat cadre, married to an IPS officer, very active and challenging.

Describing the extent of freedom given to women officers by their partners to choose the post she states: “Men are not able to accept women being in top most positions. Even the so-called educated men are not able to accept it. In some cases women are forced by their partners and family to take up sideline postings that are less challenging. Women officers for the sake of their family life accept them”.

Explaining her heartbreaking family life, she says, “I have undergone dowry torture and wife beating. I have applied for a divorce. My partner does not want me to continue the service as he is suspecting me of extra marital relationship. He has gone to the extent of threatening me to death. I have requested the Government to give protection to my life and my baby’s and to take action against him. I have made complaints against him to the Government but no action was taken for a long time and now he is on suspension”.

Madam “C” an IAS officer, holding the post of Chief Secretary in one of the northern states.

She brings out the excellence of the service as, “the hidden power of administrative service can’t be compared with any other service despite IT and other fields are flourishing. Administration can reach anywhere and exist everywhere. It is the best career”.

Towards increasing the number of women in to the service, she quotes, “we need to educate women, develop self-confidence and make them realize that they can contribute to the nation apart from being domestic women. Girl children are getting less nutrition comparatively and Government needs to take more effective steps to rectify that”.

Bringing out the lapses in administration, she states, “We experience shortcoming in administration. There are lapses - not able to reach the poorest of the poor because of the procedures involved for an example if an old age lady applies for pension under National Old Age Pension scheme, she has to give certain documents required by the Social Welfare Department, even after giving the required documents she has to wait for years to get the pension sanction by the government officials due to the slow and long procedures involved. Giving orders is time consuming. A few officers are afraid to give orders related to sanctioning of government aid. Auditing is becoming demoralized as they use their power to give wrong accounts and influence the persons doing auditing of government projects. Moreover there is significant level of corrupt practices with administrators. The other difficulty is that we do not have quality administrators who are not trained well for the job i.e. the generalists and professionals”.

She makes the generalization regarding women officers based on her experiences with her colleagues and she states “women officers are honest, simple, understanding, forward looking and conservative. There is no difference in performance between men and women officers. Politicians are reluctant to approach women officers directly as women are less influential compared to men. As a consequence of that there is less of political interference”.

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Madam “D” an IPS officer from Karnataka cadre, married to an IAS officer, having two children, posted as a Superintendent of Police in a northern state.

Talking about the service and the performance of women officers, “All India Services are prestigious, excellent and challenging career in spite of a number of problems. Women officers are performing excellently whatever the post may be. I can say that the unnecessary interference of politicians in administration is very less and rarely do they interrupt”. In general, women officers are less corrupted and yet to be corrupted compare to their male counterparts but they are not fully away from corrupt practices, which are visible from the news from the newspapers and Television about the corrupt women administrators who were dismissed or suspended from the service and Women IAS Associations.

Regarding the administrative capacity of women and the co-operation from subordinates she opines “Women are known to be efficient administrators. They are hard working and honest. The subordinates are very cooperative. They respect women for their efficiency. They find women officers approachable and less hesitant to share with them”.

Explaining her entering in to the service, she says, “I have undergone my coaching for the competitive examination in our state Government coaching centre. The number of students getting into service from Delhi is more as they start preparing for the competitive examination from their school onwards”.

She advocates dedication to the service saying, “Officers can do a lot of work. Women need to involve in decision-making. Attitude of women pertaining to family life need to be changed ; they need to think beyond family life and try to be successful career women”.

Conclusions and recommendations:

The study shows that the number of women getting into the services is not steadily on the increase in spite of the steps taken to promote women entrants to the services and it fluctuates from year to year. The measures identified in the study to increase the number of women in AISs are:

(i) Giving awareness and removing the misconception regarding the services.
(ii) Providing quality education and designing the curricula apt for civil service examinations.
(iii) Free and affordable coaching and scholarships.
(iv) Provision of a national academy for coaching women aspirants from all over the nation.
(v) Career counseling centres in colleges.
(vi) Reservations for disadvantaged women.
(vi) Making working conditions pro for women.
(vi) Bringing out changes in the mind set of parents and society, considering women inferior and pressing them to be family- oriented and not career oriented
(vi) Doing away with the undesirable social customs on women
(vi) Highlighting the success stories of women in AISs and the advantages of the services.

The study reveals that after the entry into AISs, the main problem the women officers face is to balance their work at home and office and the researcher suggests the following measures:

(i) Women should be clear and specific about their responsibilities at home and office. They need to channel their time. They ought to be self-dependent, have right attitude and open communication with the family members for better understanding, developing positive attitude of spouses and others in the family about their carrier.

(ii) The mindset of men needs to be changed and they need to consider their partners as their equals, understanding their difficulties, they need to support them to balance their work at home and office so that they could be just to both family life and career.

(iii) The participation of the in-laws and other members of the family enhance women officers to climb up in the professional ladder.

(iv) Female matrons for women officers having small children to lessen their responsibility, reducing tension to look after children at home. Government plays a role in this regard, allotting female matron to such officers. This sharing of responsibility invariably boosts their performance in their job. This arrangement would be of much help especially for those who are in the field postings and on tour.

(v) Family needs to realise the difficulties of women officers in balancing their work at home and office and show a positive attitude towards them, giving cooperation and sharing the burden of work at home and create a happy home environment.

The study identifies that woman officers do not have sufficient time to spend with the family. The researcher suggests that:

(i) Women officers need to habituate themselves to allot sufficient time for spending with the family in spite of their busy schedule. Women are accredited of their multiple role play and if they carefully channelise their time factor, this multiple role players can effectively manage time. For them, it is the quality of time that matters to spend with the family and not the quantity.