

Evolution of Civil Services

Civil Services refers to the state administrative machinery which is responsible for implementing policies made by the political executive, which constitutes of the elected representatives in a democracy.

History of Civil Services before East India Company Rule

Civil Services in India has a long history. Almost every empire which ruled in India had a centralised bureaucracy.

- As mentioned in Kautilya's Arthashastra, in Mauryan Empire, there was a centralised bureaucracy which was responsible for the collection of taxes.
- A similar type of governing machinery also existed under the Gupta period.
- Even the Mughals had also created an elaborate bureaucracy for controlling the entire region, which was known as the Mansabdari system. It ranked officers based on the strength of troops they commanded.
- Until the arrival of the East India Company, there was no clear separation between civilian officials and military officials.
- The British systematised civil services in India by separating civil services from the military services and creates a hierarchy of officials who are paid out of public revenues.

History of Civil Services in the British Era

- When the East India Company established itself in India, then it started the Covenanted Civil Services (CCS) for better management and control of the country.
- Initially, Civil Servants of the CCS were nominated by the Directors of the East India Company. After that, they are trained in London and then sent to India for their services.
- The concept of a merit-based Civil Service was introduced in India after Lord Macaulay's Report of the Select Committee of British Parliament in 1854.
- After 1855, recruitment to the ICS was done based on a competitive examination, and on merit, they are selected.
- For the conduct of this merit-based examination, a Civil Service Commission was set up in London in 1854 and examinations started after 1855.
- In the initial years, the examinations were conducted only in London, and the maximum and minimum age criteria were 23 years and 18 years, respectively.

Civil Services under Crown Rule: Post-1857 Revolt

- After 1857 revolt, the power was transferred to the British Crown and many changes were made after that.
- After 1886 the service was renamed as the Imperial Civil Service and later came to be known the Indian Civil Service.
- The Indian Civil Services Act of 1861 mandated certain posts under the Government of India to be reserved for citizens who had been a resident of India for 7 years or more. This gave Indians a way to enter into the higher civil services.
- The Indian Civil Services Act of 1870 furthered the Indianization of civil services process.
- The syllabus of the examination was designed in such a way so that only European could succeed, which makes it difficult for Indian candidates. However, in 1864, Shri Satyendranath Tagore became the first Indian who got success in this exam. After that more Indians succeeded in later years.
- Lord Dufferin appointed Aitchison Committee for the recommendation of changes in the civil services which recommended the replacement of Covenanted and Uncovenanted Civil Services with Imperial, Provincial, and Subordinate civil services and they also recommended for inclusion of Indians in public services.
- A further thrust to the inclusion of Indians in the civil services was given in 1912 when the Islington Commission suggested for inclusion of 25 % of the higher posts in Indian Civil Services by Indians and recommended for recruitment of higher posts partly in India and partly in England.
- It was only after the Montagu Chelmsford reforms in 1922, Indian Civil Service Examination began to be held in India also, with the setting up of the Federal Public Service Commission.
- The Public Service Commission of India was established in 1926 whose first chairman was Sir Ross Barker.
- After 1939, due to non-availability of Europeans, the strength of Indians in the service increased.
- After independence, the ICS became the Indian Administrative Service (IAS).

Characteristics of Civil Services in the British Era

- It was based on the deep-seated so-called racial superiority of British from Indians.
- Almost all the high-level posts which have considerable power was reserved for Europeans.
- Only those low paid jobs were open for Indians in which they had no authority.

- The recruitment process was discriminatory as examinations were held in London and the syllabus of the exam involved knowledge of subjects (Greek, Latin, English, etc.) which was alien for Indian natives.
- Due to these reasons, the selection of Indians in the services was negligible.

Evolution of Civil Services in Independent India

- Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was among the top leaders who had stressed for the continuation of the civil services in India because of the belief that an organised bureaucracy was necessary for ensuring the unity & integrity of the newly independent India.
- He also supported the need for having uniformity in the administrative system throughout the country and for stressing the need to all India Services like IAS, IPS, and IFS.
- The GoI Act, 1935 enlarged the powers of the commission and made it a Federal Public Service Commission.
- With the enactment of the Constitution in 1950, the Federal Public Service Commission was renamed as Union Public Service Commission by virtue of Clause (1) of Article 378 of the Constitution.
- UPSC was assigned the responsibility of conducting the civil services examination every year.
- The Indian Forest Service (IFS) was also constituted under the All India Service Act, 1951 in the year 1966 by the Government of India.
- Kothari Committee of 1976 had recommended a three-stage selection process. A preliminary examination which is of objective type with one Optional and General Studies paper each. The main examination is of the subjective type with nine papers. The final stage is the Personality Test.
- Satish Chandra Committee of 1989 recommended the introduction of an Essay paper and a greater weightage for the interview (Personality Test).
- The Hota Commission of 2004 recommended for introduction of an aptitude paper in the preliminary examination which was later implemented.
- Presently in India, there are three All India Services named as the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), the Indian Police Service (IPS) and the Indian Forest Service (IFS).
- Till 2012, the examination for the selection in the Indian Forest Services was conducted separately. However, since 2013 onwards, the pattern for the Indian Forest Service Examination has been changed and has been made similar in pattern to that of the Civil Services Examination.
- From 2013 onwards, the Civil Services (Preliminary) Examination has been mandated as the screening test for both the services, i.e. Indian Forest Service Examination as well as the Civil Services Examination.

The Civil Services during the British Indian period was of crucial importance. It acted as the steel frame on which the British Empire rested. Britishers realised that alien rule in a country like India could survive only with a heavy hand and the bureaucracy became useful in this regard.

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