

Public Administration in India: A Discipline in Search of Identity and the Roadmap to Sustainable Governance

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The academic and professional trajectory of Public Administration in India represents a complex narrative of transition, moving from its nascent stages as an appendage of Political Science to its current status as a multidimensional discipline grappling with the pressures of globalization, technological disruption, and indigenous resurgence. Historically, the discipline has oscillated between the rigid structures of colonial legacy and the aspirational goals of a burgeoning welfare state (Chakrabarty & Chand, 2017). This search for identity is not merely an academic exercise but a fundamental quest to align administrative theory with the lived realities of a diverse and complex society. The evolution of this field is characterized by a persistent tension between Western theoretical constructs and the indigenous requirements of a post-colonial nation striving for sustainable development and good governance (Bhattacharya, 1987).

The quest for identity in Indian Public Administration is fundamentally linked to the historical context of its birth. Unlike its Western counterparts, which emerged out of a need for efficiency in industrial societies, the Indian discipline was forged in the crucible of nation-building and social reconstruction (Bhattacharya, 1997). This has created a unique "three worlds" conflict where the administrative machinery must simultaneously navigate the democratic norms of the first world, the developmental planning of the second world, and the endemic poverty of the third world (Ignited Minds, 2018). This complexity necessitates a deep dive into the historiographical roots, the theoretical dilemmas, and the institutional reforms that define the current state of the discipline.

The Historiographical Foundations of Administrative Thought in India

The search for an identity in Indian Public Administration begins with a recognition that governance is not a colonial gift but an ancient indigenous practice. Long before the arrival of the British, the Indian subcontinent possessed sophisticated administrative systems that were deeply integrated into the socio-cultural fabric (IIPA, 2024). The study of history, particularly as it pertains to competitive examinations

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like the UPSC and MPSC, emphasizes the administrative structures of various eras as essential knowledge for modern administrators.

Ancient and Medieval Administrative Paradigms

Ancient Indian history offers a wealth of administrative insights, particularly through the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya. This treatise outlines a comprehensive system of statecraft, including financial management, military organization, personnel management, law enforcement, and judicial processes (Kautilya, trans. 1915). Kautilya’s conceptualization of governance was centered on the principle of *Yogakshema*, which posits that the welfare and happiness of the subjects are the primary duties of the ruler (Goyal, 2024). The state was seen as a holistic entity consisting of seven elements (*Saptanga*), and the success of administration depended on the collaboration between the king and a structured hierarchy of ministers.

Similarly, the administrative systems of the Satvahanas, Kushans, Guptas, and the Harsha Vardhanas provided foundations for provincial and local governance. During the medieval period, the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire introduced centralized bureaucratic structures and advanced revenue systems. The Maratha administration, particularly under Shivaji Maharaj and later the Peshwas, introduced indigenous systems of judicial administration and social structure that remained resilient against foreign influence.

Historical Era	Key Administrative Philosophy	Institutional Focus	Modern Relevance
Ancient (Kautilyan)	<i>Yogakshema</i> (Welfare)	<i>Saptanga</i> (Seven Limbs of State)	Ethics and citizen-centricity
Medieval (Mughal)	Centralized Bureaucracy	<i>Mansabdari</i> / Land Revenue	Structural hierarchy
Maratha (Shivaji)	Indigenous Justice	Local Social Order	Decentralized administration
Colonial (British)	Legalism and Control	Indian Civil Service (ICS)	Rule of law and proceduralism

The Colonial Disruption and the Generalist Tradition

The arrival of British rule marked a radical departure from indigenous administrative traditions. The British established an administrative machinery designed for the primary purposes of revenue extraction and the maintenance of order. The Indian Civil Service (ICS) was created as an elite, generalist service where officers were educated in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, often remaining detached from the local populations they governed (Basu, 2004). This generalist tradition, which prioritized a broad education over technical



specialization, continues to be a defining feature of the contemporary Indian Administrative Service (IAS), despite the evolving demands of a specialized modern state.

The 1861 Police Act, a product of this era, was designed for control rather than service, creating a trust deficit between the police and the public that persists to this day (2nd ARC, 4th Report). This colonial legacy created a "policy coloniality" a political rationality that reproduces racialized realities and marginalizes indigenous knowledge (Berda, 2022). As India transitioned to independence, it inherited this structure, leading to a profound conflict between the inherited administrative organizations and the developmental needs of a new nation.

The Birth of the Academic Discipline and the Identity Crisis

The formal study of Public Administration as a distinct academic field in India is over six decades old, yet it has spent much of its existence in the shadow of Political Science. The University of Madras took the first step in 1937 by starting a diploma course, followed by Allahabad University in 1938. However, the discipline's struggle for independence has been fraught with misgivings and "identity crises" (Bhattacharya, 1987).

Mohit Bhattacharya and the Ontological Struggle

Professor Mohit Bhattacharya, a seminal figure in Indian administrative thought, succinctly described the discipline as being in a constant state of controversy regarding its status (Bhattacharya, 1987). Historically, Public Administration was treated as an integral part of Political Science, leading to a lack of professional focus (Bhattacharya, 1991). Bhattacharya argued that while administrative practices are as old as civilization, the academic discipline must continually update itself to capture the "diversity, complexity, and interactivity" of a globalized world (Bhattacharya, 2000).

The identity crisis is exacerbated by the "execution gap." Policies in India often look attractive on paper but fail in the implementation phase, leading to a continuous cycle of "administrative upgrading and change". This disconnects between theory and practice suggests that the discipline has often focused on describing structures without referencing their socio-economic and cultural roots (Chakrabarty & Bhattacharya, 2003).

The Conflict Between Western Theory and Indigenous Reality

A significant portion of the identity crisis stems from the dominance of Western theories of bureaucracy and policy studies. These theories often downplay how policy-making is inextricably connected to colonial processes of subjugating non-Western knowledge. For instance, the "policy coloniality" that operates as a political rationality often treats minority populations as "dangerous" and in need of control rather than as legal rightsholders.

This has profound implications for the Indian state, particularly in its interaction with tribal and marginalized communities. Indigenous cultures are often thrust into a shared space with modern capitalism, creating conflicts of interest and a loss of primitive identity (Sartre, trans. 2022). The modern administrative system, rooted in European modernity, often asks tribal populations to subscribe to Western facilities at the cost of their cultural heritage. This "ontic anguish" highlights the need for a Public Administration that is sensitive to the "Adivasi" reality and indigenous forms of self-determination.

The Reform Trajectory: From the First to the Second ARC

The institutional search for identity in Indian Public Administration is best captured through the various committees and commissions established since independence to overhaul the system. These reforms represent an effort to suit political changes, adapt to new socio-economic environments, and remove the "evils" that have crept into the colonial framework.

Early Reform Efforts and the First ARC

The early years after independence saw a flurry of reports aimed at reorganizing the government. Notable among these were the Appleby Reports (1953, 1956), which emphasized personal development and training for civil servants, and the Gorwala Report (1951), which analyzed administrative weaknesses.

The First Administrative Reforms Commission (First ARC), established in 1966 under Morarji Desai, was a milestone (ARC, 1966). It recognized that with the adoption of planning as a developmental strategy, administration had become more "specialized, technical, and scientific". The First ARC recommended dividing government positions into categories like general, specialized, and technical administration, signaling an early move toward professionalization. It also emphasized the importance of a common foundational course to create an *esprit de corps* among the services.

The Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2005)

The Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2nd ARC) was constituted in 2005 under Veerappa Moily to prepare a blueprint for revamping the public administrative system for the 21st century. The commission submitted 15 reports covering a vast spectrum of governance. Its overarching philosophy was to make administration more citizen-centric, transparent, accountable, efficient, and ethical.

2nd ARC Report Number	Title / Theme	Primary Focus	Key Recommendation
Report 1	Right to Information	Transparency	Repeal Official Secrets Act; proactive disclosure
Report 4	Ethics in Governance	Integrity	Lokpal/Lokayukta; Code of Ethics for Ministers
Report 6	Local Governance	Decentralization	Devolution of 3 Fs (Funds, Functions, Functionaries)
Report 10	Refurbishing Personnel Administration	Civil Service Reform	Performance-based management; Lateral entry
Report 11	Promoting Governance	e-ICT in Delivery	Citizen-centric digital services; SMART governance
Report 12	Citizen-Centric Administration	Accountability	Sevottam model; Grievance redressal
Report 13	Organizational Structure of GoI	Efficiency	Rationalizing ministries; clear mandates

Ethics and the Moral Identity of the Discipline

The 2nd ARC's report on "Ethics in Governance" identifies corruption, nepotism, and conflict of interest as factors weakening public trust. It argues that without integrity in public life, even the best policies will fail. The commission recommended a strict "Code of Ethics" for civil servants, emphasizing values like selflessness, integrity, objectivity, and accountability (2nd ARC, 2008). These values are intended to shift the reclusive image of the bureaucracy to one of dedicated "servants of society".

Transparency and the Right to Information

The 2nd ARC conceptualized the Right to Information (RTI) not merely as a legal right but as a transformative tool for participatory democracy. It argued that secrecy is the breeding ground for corruption and recommended that the Official Secrets Act (OSA) be repealed and replaced with provisions in the National Security Act. The commission suggested a "harm test" information should only be withheld if its disclosure actually harms public interest.



Personnel Administration: The Generalist-Specialist Tension

The debate between the generalist tradition and the need for specialist expertise remains a central theme in the identity search of the IAS. The imagination of the IAS officer continues to be organized around the principles of the colonial civil service a man broadly educated and able to handle any responsibility based on general knowledge.

The Move Toward Professionalization

Reform committees have consistently expressed concern that the skills and knowledge of IAS officers may not match the technical demands of domains like finance, defence, or social development. The 2nd ARC recommended a shift toward "domain assignment" where officers develop expertise in specific sectors during their careers. Furthermore, the introduction of lateral entry hiring experts from outside the government for high-level technical job is seen as a radical yet necessary step to bring in specialized expertise.

Recruitment/Promotion Aspect	Traditional Colonial Model	Reform (2nd ARC) Model
Selection	General merit exam (young age)	Revamped UPSC criteria; Higher age limit
Promotion	Seniority-based	Performance and merit-based
Expertise	Generalist rotation	Domain assignment and Lateral entry
Tenure	Frequent transfers (punishment/reward)	Fixed minimum tenure (3 years)

Mission Karmayogi and Capacity Building

"Mission Karmayogi" represents the modern attempt to build state capacity through practicum-based training. It aims to move beyond theoretical learning to a competency-based model using the iGOT Karmayogi portal. This shift acknowledges that a merit-based selection of young people with no experience requires robust, continuous training to bridge the "wide chasm between public expectation and service delivery" (CBC, 2025).

Mapping Indian Public Administration with the SDGs

The identity of Public Administration in the 21st century is increasingly defined by its commitment to global benchmarks, particularly the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). India has integrated the SDGs into its National Development Agenda, with NITI Aayog acting as the nodal agency for monitoring progress (NITI Aayog, 2024).



SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions- The Governance Core of Sustainable Development

Within the architecture of the Sustainable Development Goals, SDG 16 occupies a foundational position, as it directly addresses the institutional prerequisites of development—rule of law, accountability, transparency, and participatory governance. In public administration terms, SDG 16 functions as an “enabling goal” or governance accelerator, without which the realization of social, economic, and environmental goals remains structurally constrained. In the Indian context, the operationalization of SDG 16 is closely aligned with administrative reforms, legal-institutional mechanisms, and digital governance initiatives, reflecting a shift from normative commitments to implementation-oriented governance.

Target 16.3: Access to Justice and Rule of Law

Access to justice is a core dimension of democratic governance, directly linked to state legitimacy and citizen trust. India’s response to Target 16.3 has been primarily institutional, with the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) playing a pivotal role in expanding legal aid, alternative dispute resolution, and legal awareness, particularly for marginalized populations. From a public administration perspective, NALSA represents an attempt to democratize justice delivery by reducing procedural complexity and transaction costs associated with formal legal systems.

The integration of technology-driven solutions, such as digital tracking of undertrial prisoners and court management systems, further reflects a governance shift toward outcome-based justice administration. However, critical administrative challenges persist, including inter-agency coordination deficits between police, prisons, and judiciary, uneven digital capacity across states, and the continued problem of case pendency. Thus, while institutional mechanisms exist, the effectiveness of access to justice remains contingent upon administrative capacity, federal coordination, and process reform.

Target 16.10: Public Access to Information and Democratic Accountability

Public access to information constitutes the informational foundation of accountability, transforming citizens from passive recipients of services into active participants in governance. The Right to Information Act (RTI Act) has been one of India’s most significant governance innovations, institutionalizing transparency as a legal right rather than an administrative discretion. In governance terms, RTI operationalizes horizontal and vertical accountability, enabling citizens, civil society, and media to scrutinize administrative action.

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of RTI as a governance instrument is increasingly shaped by institutional resilience including the autonomy of information commissions, administrative responsiveness, and protection of whistleblowers. Delays, vacancies, and bureaucratic resistance indicate that transparency reforms must be supported by institutional safeguards, not merely statutory provisions.

Target 16.5: Reducing Corruption through Ethical and Institutional Reforms

Corruption undermines administrative legitimacy and distorts policy outcomes, making Target 16.5 central to governance reform. India's approach combines normative, legal, and procedural interventions, notably the ethics-related recommendations of the Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2nd ARC) and transparency mechanisms such as RTI. From a public administration standpoint, these reforms signify a movement from individual-centric moral exhortation to system-centric integrity frameworks, emphasizing codes of conduct, conflict-of-interest regulation, and performance accountability.

However, the persistence of corruption highlights a structural paradox: formal rules coexist with informal practices. Weak enforcement, political interference, and fragmented vigilance institutions limit the transformative potential of anti-corruption frameworks. This underscores the need for institutional convergence, where ethics, transparency, and accountability mechanisms reinforce each other rather than operate in silos.

Target 16.6: Building Effective, Accountable, and Transparent Institutions

Target 16.6 synthesizes the core administrative values of efficiency, accountability, and transparency, directly aligning with the discipline of Public Administration. India's emphasis on e-governance, digital service delivery, and "SMART" administration (Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive, and Transparent) reflects an attempt to modernize the state apparatus and enhance service responsiveness. Digitization has reduced discretion, improved service reach, and enabled real-time monitoring, particularly at the citizen-state interface.

Yet, from a governance perspective, technological solutions are enablers rather than substitutes for institutional reform. Variations in administrative capacity across states, digital exclusion, and the risk of algorithmic opacity raise concerns about equity and accountability. Effective institutions, therefore, require not only technological modernization but also administrative decentralization, human resource reform, and citizen-centric design.



SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals -Cooperative Federalism and Multi-Level Governance

While SDG 16 focuses on institutional quality, SDG 17 provides the governance mechanism for implementation, emphasizing partnerships, coordination, and collective action. In India, the localization of SDGs reflects a deliberate shift toward a “whole-of-government” and “whole-of-society” approach, consistent with the principles of cooperative federalism articulated by NITI Aayog. This framework recognizes states and local governments not as mere implementing agencies, but as co-creators of development outcomes.

From a public administration lens, SDG 17 operationalizes multi-level governance, requiring vertical alignment between Union, State, and local governments, as well as horizontal coordination across departments and sectors. The emphasis on public-private partnerships, civil society engagement, and community participation reflects a transition from state-centric administration to networked governance.

However, the effectiveness of partnerships depends on institutional clarity, fiscal devolution, and administrative capacity at the sub-national level. Uneven state capacity, fragmented planning processes, and limited data integration pose challenges to SDG localization. Moreover, the normative commitment to “leaving no one behind” necessitates targeted administrative strategies for identifying, empowering, and monitoring outcomes for marginalized groups an area where governance performance remains uneven.

SDG Goal	Indian Initiative / Program	Administrative Mechanism
SDG 1 (No Poverty)	MNREGA / PMJDY	Financial inclusion and rural employment
SDG 6 (Clean Water)	Swachh Bharat / Jal Jeevan	Sanitation and water management
SDG 16 (Institutions)	Digital India / RTI Act	Transparency and technology-led governance
SDG 17 (Partnerships)	NITI Aayog SDG Index	Cooperative federalism and monitoring

Administrative Reforms for *Viksit Bharat 2047*: Strengthening the State’s Governing Capacity

India’s aspiration to become a developed nation by 2047—*Viksit Bharat 2047*—is fundamentally contingent upon the capacity, integrity, and adaptability of its administrative system. While economic growth and technological advancement are necessary conditions, they are insufficient without a professional, stable, and data-driven bureaucracy capable of translating policy intent into effective outcomes. Persistent administrative inefficiencies such as personnel instability, skill mismatches, weak accountability, and



fragile local institutions pose structural risks to this long-term vision. Against this backdrop, eight transformative administrative reforms have been identified to address foundational weaknesses in India's governance architecture.

Digital HRMIS: Rationalising Personnel Management

A unified Digital Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS) represents a critical reform aimed at modernising personnel administration. Platforms such as e-HRMS 2.0 and Manav Sampada seek to create a "single source of truth" for employee data, encompassing postings, promotions, performance records, and training histories. From a public administration perspective, such systems reduce discretion, curb favouritism in transfers, and enhance transparency in human resource decisions. More importantly, digital HRMIS enables strategic workforce planning, aligning skills with organizational needs an essential requirement for a developed-state bureaucracy.

Minimum Stable Tenures: Ensuring Administrative Continuity

Frequent transfers of key officials, particularly at the district level, undermine institutional memory, policy continuity, and accountability. Ensuring minimum stable tenures for positions such as District Magistrates and Department Heads is therefore central to governance reform. Fixed tenures strengthen role clarity and outcome responsibility, allowing administrators to plan, implement, and evaluate policies over a meaningful time horizon. In governance terms, tenure stability reinforces administrative neutrality and professionalism, insulating field administration from arbitrary political or bureaucratic interference.

Practicum-Based Training: From Generalists to Capable Professionals

Traditional civil service training has often been criticised for its excessive theoretical orientation. The shift toward practicum-based, competency-driven training, facilitated through platforms such as iGOT Karmayogi, marks a significant paradigm change. This reform aligns with the doctrine of New Public Service, which emphasizes skills, adaptability, and citizen-centric problem-solving. Continuous, modular, and role-specific training enhances administrative responsiveness and prepares civil servants to operate in complex policy environments shaped by technology, data, and inter-sectoral coordination.

State Statistics Commissions: Institutionalising Evidence-Based Governance

Effective governance in a developed economy requires high-quality, reliable, and timely data. The establishment and strengthening of State Statistics Commissions is intended to improve the integrity of administrative data at the sub-national level. From a public administration standpoint, this reform addresses



a critical gap in evidence-based policymaking, enabling states to design, monitor, and evaluate policies based on credible statistical foundations rather than ad hoc estimations. Robust statistical institutions also enhance transparency and public trust in government decision-making.

UPSC Criteria Revamp: Aligning Recruitment with Contemporary Governance Needs

Recruitment is the entry point of administrative capacity. A re-evaluation of Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) recruitment criteria is essential to align civil services with the demands of a modern, innovation-driven state. While the traditional emphasis on generalist administrators has merits, contemporary governance increasingly requires analytical ability, domain knowledge, technological literacy, and ethical reasoning. Revamping recruitment standards does not imply abandoning the generalist model, but rather augmenting it with competencies relevant to complex policy environments.

Structured Lateral Entry: Integrating Domain Expertise

To complement career bureaucrats, structured lateral entry enables the induction of professionals from academia, the private sector, and civil society into senior administrative roles. From a governance perspective, lateral entry enhances institutional diversity and technical depth, particularly in sectors such as infrastructure, digital governance, health, and climate policy. When embedded within transparent selection processes and clear accountability frameworks, lateral entry can correct skill asymmetries without undermining bureaucratic cohesion.

Contract-Based Recruitment: Enhancing Flexibility and Performance Orientation

The introduction of contract-based recruitment represents a move toward greater flexibility and performance orientation in public employment. Such arrangements allow governments to rapidly acquire specialized skills and align incentives with outcomes. In public administration theory, this reflects a cautious adoption of managerial principles, emphasizing results and accountability. However, this reform requires robust safeguards to prevent arbitrariness and to ensure that contractual arrangements complement, rather than erode, institutional stability and public service values.

Local Body Revenue Capacity: Fiscal Foundations of Decentralised Governance

A developed nation requires strong local governments capable of delivering quality public services. Enhancing the revenue-raising capacity of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and Panchayats, particularly through improved property tax assessment and collection, is therefore a critical reform. From a decentralisation perspective, fiscal autonomy strengthens local accountability, planning capacity, and



service delivery effectiveness. Without adequate own-source revenues, local governments remain dependent on higher tiers, limiting the realization of grassroots democracy and responsive governance

The Future of the Discipline: Digital and Citizen-Centric

The future identity of Indian Public Administration is being shaped by "India's Techade"-the massive adoption of technology in governance. This involves the utilization of ICT for achieving the "SMART" way forward: Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive, and Transparent administration (2nd ARC, 11th Report).

The Sevottam Model and Citizen Charters

The "Sevottam" model, recommended by the 2nd ARC, focuses on three pillars: the Citizen's Charter, public grievance redressal, and service delivery capability. A Citizen's Charter is an instrument of organizational transparency that outlines the commitment of an organization toward the standards and timeframe of service delivery. This shift is based on the premise that the "Citizen is King".

Social Audit and Participatory Governance

Modern governance involves the articulation of interests by all stakeholders. Social Audit (SA) helps bridge the gap between vision and reality by measuring, understanding, and reporting an organization's performance. The emergence of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and NGOs as "bridges between the people and the state" signifies a shift where the state provides economic security while the "development industry" (SHGs, NGOs, CSOs) assists in the delivery of services.

Synthesis: Towards a New Professional Identity in Public Administration

The discipline of Public Administration in India is undergoing a fundamental epistemic and professional transformation. No longer confined to its historical positioning as a theoretical adjunct of Political Science, it is increasingly asserting itself as a practice-oriented professional field, defined by a distinct toolkit of competencies such as policy analysis, digital literacy, ethical leadership, and institutional design. This shift reflects a growing recognition that the legitimacy of the state must be assessed not merely by policy intent or constitutional design, but by the measurable outcomes of governmental action, as emphasized by institutions such as the Indian Institute of Public Administration and the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances. Governance effectiveness is thus increasingly evaluated through implementation capacity, service delivery outcomes, and citizen satisfaction.



At a deeper level, this transformation represents a search for disciplinary identity, marking a transition from the colonial “subject” orientation—characterized by rule-bound control and administrative distance—to a democratic “citizen” orientation grounded in participation, accountability, and responsiveness. Public Administration in contemporary India is therefore required to reconcile inherited institutional legacies with evolving democratic expectations, positioning itself as both an instrument of the state and a facilitator of citizenship.

Within this evolving identity, Public Administration must embody a set of carefully balanced characteristics. It must be indigenous yet global, rooted in civilizational values such as *Yogakshema* (welfare and security) and *Dharma* (ethical duty), while simultaneously aligning with global governance benchmarks such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals. It must be specialized yet compassionate, drawing upon lateral entry and domain expertise to address complex policy challenges without losing its normative commitment to social justice and inclusion. Equally, it must be digital yet human, leveraging information and communication technologies to reduce corruption, delay, and discretion, while guarding against the emergence of new forms of exclusion or “policy coloniality” embedded in unaccountable technological systems.

Way Forward: Transitioning from Administrative Control to State Capacity

As India approaches its centenary of independence in 2047, the central challenge before Public Administration is to evolve from a narrow preoccupation with rules and procedures toward a governance paradigm focused on roles, results, and responsibility. This transition, articulated through reforms such as Mission Karmayogi, underscores the need to reconceptualize the civil service as a dynamic instrument of state capacity rather than a static regulatory apparatus. The “Way Forward” can be understood through a four-pronged strategic framework aimed at consolidating both disciplinary identity and administrative effectiveness.

First, decolonizing knowledge systems is essential to reclaim intellectual autonomy in administrative thought. Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems into public administration curricula enables the discipline to move beyond imported analytical frameworks without rejecting global standards. Classical texts such as the *Arthashastra* and normative models like Gandhian Panchayati Raj offer robust theoretical insights into statecraft, decentralization, and ethical governance, which can coexist with contemporary public management and development theories.



Second, institutionalizing digital governance represents a structural shift from fragmented, paper-based administration toward integrated Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI). The use of artificial intelligence and data analytics for predictive governance and service delivery holds significant promise, but must be accompanied by strong norms of algorithmic accountability, transparency, and equity. Digital transformation, from a governance perspective, must enhance administrative discretion with intelligence, not replace democratic judgment with opaque automation.

Third, human capital transformation remains the linchpin of administrative reform. Implementing the personnel-related recommendations of the Second Administrative Reforms Commission, particularly those concerning fixed tenures, performance-linked promotions, and competency-based postings, is critical to building a future-ready civil service. Mission Karmayogi's emphasis on role-based competencies marks a decisive shift from seniority-driven progression to capability-driven governance, aligning administrative incentives with public outcomes.

Fourth, localizing development is indispensable for translating national visions into grassroots realities. Strengthening the financial, technical, and administrative capacities of Panchayats and Urban Local Bodies enables them to anchor the localization of SDGs and respond effectively to context-specific challenges. From a state capacity perspective, decentralization is not merely a constitutional obligation but a functional necessity for inclusive and responsive governance.

The roadmap articulated by the Second Administrative Reforms Commission continues to provide the most credible and comprehensive blueprint for this transition. By internalizing these reforms, Public Administration in India can transcend its long-standing identity dilemma and emerge as a distinct professional vocation dedicated to building state capacity. In doing so, the discipline will move decisively from being a "field in search of identity" to a central pillar of nation-building, capable of steering India toward a democratic, inclusive, and developmentally effective future by 2047.

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