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Q5

Two different kinds of attitudes exhibited by public servants towards their work have been identified as bureaucratic attitude and the democratic attitude. (10 Marks) (a) Distinguish between these two terms and write their merits and demerits. (b) Is it possible to balance the two to create a better administration for the faster development of our country?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2015 · GS IV · 12 marks · Attitude

Attitude: content, structure, function; its influence and relation with thought and behaviour; moral and political attitudes; social influence and persuasion.

Core demand of the question

- Distinguish bureaucratic and democratic attitudes in public servants, with merits and demerits. Ask whether the two can be balanced for faster development

Revision summary

Bureaucratic attitude is rule-and-hierarchy first; it gives predictability and can freeze into red tape.

Democratic attitude is citizen-first within law; it gives dignity and can collapse into crowd-pleasing illegality.

- **Merits and demerits are twins:** impersonality can be fairness or cruelty.
- **Balance is possible:** simple published rules, timelines, e-service, hearings and speaking orders.

Faster development needs decisions that are both lawful and humane, not a war between the two habits.

Introduction

The same khaki file can be a wall or a door. Bureaucratic attitude and democratic attitude are two habits toward that file. Development needs a balance, not a slogan that abolishes rules.

Body**(a) Distinction, merits, demerits**

- Bureaucratic attitude is rule-first, hierarchy-first, and paper-first. The citizen is a case. The clock of the office matters more than the clock of the queue.
- **Democratic attitude is citizen-first within the law:** hearing, explanation, equality, and a sense that power is borrowed from the republic.
- **Max Weber** described bureaucracy as specialised, impersonal and rule-bound. That impersonality can be fairness. It can also be coldness.
- **Merits of bureaucratic attitude:** predictability, a trail for audit, less open favouritism if rules are real, continuity when ministers change, and a brake on a populist illegal order.

- **Demerits:** delay, red tape, treating the poor as illiterate nuisances, hiding behind "the rule" when a lawful discretion could help, and ritual over result.
- **Merits of democratic attitude:** dignity at the counter, feedback, social audit, willingness to explain in the local language, and schemes that match need.
- **Demerits:** if "democratic" is misread as pleasing whoever shouts, rules collapse, majorities bully minorities, and an officer becomes a local politician in a government chair.
- A purely bureaucratic office will not hear a disabled applicant who cannot climb the stairs. A purely "democratic" office may skip the tender because a crowd wants a favourite contractor.

(b) Can they be balanced for faster development?

- **Yes. The balance is Weber plus Gandhi:** firm rules that are simple, and a face that is human.
- Faster development fails when files sleep and when files are sold. Both attitudes, unmixed, produce one of those two.
- **Practical mix:** published standard operating procedures and timelines (bureaucratic clarity) plus help-desks, online tracking and hearings for the affected (democratic access).
- **Sevottam and citizen charters tried this mix:** a promise of service, a time limit, and a complaint path.
- E-governance cuts the rude clerk without abolishing the rule. **Direct benefit transfer** is impersonal in a good bureaucratic sense and democratic in reaching the named person.
- Training should reward speaking orders that are kind and lawful, not only minutes that are long.
- Political executive must stop using "democratic pressure" to smash a tender, and stop using "procedure" to bury a drought.
- For faster development, the officer needs courage to decide inside the rule, and humility to explain the rule to the last person in the line.
- The **Second Administrative Reforms Commission** asked for citizen-centric administration, which is this balance in one phrase.

Flow diagram

Bureaucratic attitude -> Rules trail audit
 Democratic attitude -> Citizen dignity
 Rules trail audit -> Citizen-centric administration
 Citizen dignity -> Citizen-centric administration
 Citizen-centric administration -> Faster fair development

Conclusion

Bureaucratic attitude gives a spine of rules. Democratic attitude gives a spine of dignity. Development needs both: a file that moves on time, and a citizen who is not treated as dirt. That mix is possible and is already named in citizen charters and e-service.

Facts & figures

Max Weber on bureaucracy

Classic account of rule-bound, specialised, impersonal office; the merit is fairness, the risk is an iron cage of procedure.

Citizen's charter / Sevottam

Indian attempts to bind offices to service standards, time limits and grievance redress - a democratic overlay on bureaucracy.

Second Administrative Reforms Commission

Asked for citizen-centric administration rather than a fortress of files.

Direct benefit transfer

An impersonal (bureaucratic) pipe that can still be democratic if the named poor person actually receives the rupee.

Speaking order

A reasoned decision that serves audit (bureaucracy) and the citizen's right to understand (democracy).

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