

## STUDY MATERIAL: HANDOUT- 21

### PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND ECOLOGY

#### TOPICS COVERED

1. ECOLOGY, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DEVELOPMENT
2. RIGGS, ADMINISTRATION AND ECOLOGY
  - Riggs and Comparative Public Administration
  - Shortcomings of Weberian Model
  - Agraria and Industria Model
  - Limitations of Classification
  - Fused-Prismatic-Diffracted Model
  - Prismatic Society
  - Prismatic Society : Various Aspects
  - Evaluation

## PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND ECOLOGY

### Ecology, Public Administration and Development

How ecology has become a factor of public administration is very interesting. Though comparative public administration has lost a major part of its glamour ecology and public administration have filled up the vacuum. The credit of analysing public administration in the background of ecology should go to Fred Riggs. Before discussing the various aspects of this issue we first of all define ecology.

*"Ecology is the study of interactions of living organisms with one another and with their non-living environment of matter and energy, study of the structure and function of nature."* There is an incessant interaction between living beings and non-living environment. Needless to say that this interaction never goes unnoticed or it is-not correct to say that the interaction creates no impact. Analysed from various angles it shall be observed that the interaction creates some consequences upon society and the public administration is considerably influenced because it is not possible for public administration or the government to avoid the influence of nature upon men and society. The public administration begins to study the relationship between- society and nature and this is the subject of public administration and ecology. Because of the clear influence of environment upon society and mode of living of the people public administration and ecology have come to be related.

#### Heckel, a German scholar, has defined ecology in the following words

The science of relations between organism and their environment. There is practically no difference between these two definitions. Both living creatures and non-living environment are in close relationship. Even the living elements of the environment are in numerous ways influencing the society. The living elements of society, that is human beings, react and this reaction must be brought under consideration. If this reaction is neglected, that is, no action is taken, that may inflict irreparable harm upon the society. For this reason the society responds to the action and reaction between society and environment. Fred Riggs has drawn our attention to this aspect and again from this arises an issue popularly known as public administration and ecology.

The administrators, ecologists, scientists, environmentalists and politicians— everyone admits that the interaction between society and environment or ecology cannot be denied and whenever a policy is going to be formulated this type of interaction must properly be taken into account. In other words, an administrator must formulate policies considering the most important idea that environment has clear influence on administration. Ecology, environment and administration are closely interlinked. Again, all these combinedly influence politics or political system in general. The influence of ecology upon the administrative system of a country is so enormous that if anybody neglects it he will land in wrong footing or draw wrong conclusions. Fred Riggs was the first man who drew our attention to the importance of ecology upon the administrative systems. Of course, before him, **Charles Darwin's famous theory** is that only the fit can survive and according to Darwin, one who wins in the battle against environment is fit. So we find that there is a very close relationship between man or society and environment.

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## RIGGS, ADMINISTRATION AND ECOLOGY

### Riggs and Comparative Public Administration

Riggs had extensively studied the administrative systems of several countries in a comparative way. He observed that almost all the researchers were comparing the administrative structures of both developed and developing states and did not bring the influence of environment into consideration. He felt that this way of comparing the administrative systems was improper. He said that in the administrative system of every country there is an inevitable influence of environment on administration and, hence, any comparative public administration must take note of it. It is because the administration of an industrialised developed state is qualitatively different from the public administration of an underdeveloped state. Again, the principles applied by the administrators of a developed state have very little relevance in a developing state. **Riggs has lamented that the public administrators, politicians and policy-makers** have ignored this important point. Not only this, the policy-makers of the newly independent states, being guided by zeal to develop their states within a short time, applied the administrative principles of the developed states. But they forgot to note that the public administration of developed states reached the present state through several stages of test and experiment. Moreover, one set of principles cannot be applied everywhere. Riggs further stated that a perfect method of comparative public administration must be based on *ecological study* or analysis. It must also be *nomothetic*. Riggs developed a comparative public administration on the basis of ecology and, for this purpose, he divided all the societies into two broad categories—*industria* and *agraria*. Riggs has said that the public administration, structure of government, social mobility, judicial system, law etc. of **these two types** of state are different. So, while making comparison, these aspects must be brought under consideration.

### Shortcomings of Weberian Model

Max Weber (1864-1920), the famous German sociologist, first drew our attention to the enormous importance of bureaucracy in the administrative systems of capitalist states. In his opinion, capitalism provided an impetus to the expansion of *rational administration*. He has further said that day after day the public administration of all industrialised capitalist states is constantly being bureaucratised. It has created hierarchical structure and the entire bureaucratic administration is based on written documents and specialised training. This is the gist of **Weberian** model of public administration in general and bureaucracy in particular. But there are certain shortcomings so far as comparative public administration and the influence of ecology on public administration are concerned. In other words, Weber constructed the bureaucratic model of public administration mainly for the industrially developed nations of the West. Naturally this model of bureaucracy cannot fully and properly be applied to the developing nations of Asia and Africa. **Ramesh K Arora** in his article *Rigg's Administrative Ecology* says : "**Riggs has concluded that Weber's ideal type construct of bureaucracy, because of its assumptions of a relatively autonomous administrative system, is not particularly relevant to the study of developing societies, where the administrative structures do not have the same degree of autonomy from other social structures as do their counterparts in many of the developed societies**" What Riggs has tried to say is that in developed societies the bureaucrats enjoy autonomy and are concerned with public

administration only. But the bureaucrats in developing societies perform extra-administrative works. It is believed that bureaucrats are rational. But Riggs does not subscribe to this view.

### **Agraria and Industria Model**

Fred Riggs followed the comparative public administration method for his analysis, but he abandoned the classical or the model followed by his predecessors. **Gabriel Almond** in his *The Politics of the Developing Areas* (1959) says "Both Sutton and Riggs develop models of industrial and agricultural political systems, .... The industrial type of political system is characterised by universalistic, achievement and functionally specific norms and structures' and the agriculture type of political system is characterised by particularistic, ascriptive and functionally diffuse norms of structures. Put in other terms the industrial model is characterised by law, social mobility, and differentiation of specialised structures, while the agricultural systems are characterised by custom, status and the relative absence of specialisation". This is the basis of Riggs's comparative analysis-of politics. If we fail to observe this basic difference between these two models or types of society any attempt to compare between them will be fruitless venture.

First of all we shall try to find out certain basic *characteristics of agraria*. **Riggs in his *Agraria and Industria—Towards a Typology of Comparative Administration* has drawn our attention to the following features of agraria society :**

- (1) In agraria societies agriculture is the primary source of livelihood. It is, however, not correct to hold that in such society there is no existence of industry. The point is, a majority of the people use agriculture to draw the source of livelihood.
- (2) Though agriculture is the most important source of livelihood, this sector is extremely backward. Compared with industria the agriculture of agraria is highly backward.
- (3) So far as the mobility of people from one place to another is concerned the agraria lags far behind the industria. Of course there is hardly any scope for people to move freely from one place to another. The attachment to agriculture is so formidable that people do not normally try to move from one region to another. Moreover, people are engaged in agriculture.
- (4) In agraria there are many associations, but these are functionally specific, non-ascriptive in structure. The implication is the social organisation perform certain specific functions.
- (5) People of agraria are religious-minded and politics is very often mixed with religion. Not only that, both religion and politics control each other. People are guided by religious superstition.
- (6) The groups of agraria societies form groups and associations but these cannot be fruitfully compared with the pressure groups of industria.
- (7) People of agraria lead a very simple life. We do not say that there is no complexity but it is less perceptible in agraria. These are the chief features of agraria society but some are exaggerated by Riggs.

**Riggs has also pointed out certain features of industria :**

- (1) In industrial society there exist associations and they are "functionally specific". It means that in such societies associations are formed for specific purpose. They are to some extent like interest groups.

- (2) An important characteristic of industria is there is high degree of social mobility. This is due to the fact that industrial workers who are skilled or highly skilled move from one place to another for better and greater privilege. This type of mobility is not generally found in agraria.
- (3) According to Fred Riggs modern industrial society is characterised by well-developed occupational system. Different industries manufacture different commodities and, as a result of this, in society there are various occupational groups. Agraria does not possess it.
- (4) In an industrial society there are also religions and various superstitions, but these do not control the behaviour of people in all their activities. In industria religion is not a controlling factor of people's behaviour.

### **Limitations of Classification**

Riggs's division of societies into agraria and industria is to some extent novel no doubt but the critics do not treat it as final. They are of opinion that an agricultural society or in Riggs's term, agraria, can never remain agricultural for an indefinite period of time. Through continuous efforts they develop industries and, finally, it may be an industria. When that stage is arrived the agraria may be called industria. But in between agraria and industria there is a stage which may be called *transitia* and it is a very important stage. It is uncalled for that in Riggs's system there is practically no special place of such type of society though very important. He simply mentions the existence of such society.

There is an *objection of exclusivity*. Critics say that agraria does not mean that the society is exclusively agricultural and there is either no existence of industry or the industrial progress is nominal. On the other hand, in an industria, the place of agriculture is absolutely nominal. There are some societies which developed both industrially and agriculturally. The government of any modern state formulates policy for the balanced development of both agriculture and industry and this attempt, to some extent, negates Rigg's division into agraria and industria. In other words, there is no ideal or perfect agraria or industria. In reality, many modern states are *mixed types*. Hence any full-fledged theory on the basis of agraria and industria does not convey the real picture.

Francis Sutton is another supporter of the division of modern societies into agraria and industria. In his paper ***Social Theory and Comparative Politics*** he makes the following observation: "The major societies of the modern world show varying combinations of the patterns represented in the ideal types I have sketched out. Some stand close to the model of industrial society. Others are in various transitional states which hopefully may be understood better by conceptions of where they have been and where they may be going."

Almond admits that there is *lot of usefulness of these theoretical efforts*. Any fruitful analysis of comparative public administration requires to be based on the *dualism hypothesis*. But the dualism or the division of all societies into industria and agraria cannot be made absolutely important. Almond comments : "One would have to argue that the modern "industrial" system, to use Riggs's term, never exists by itself, but always has an agrarian system in it. This dualism of political structure is not only characteristic of modern Western political system but of non-Western and primitive ones i.e., there are both primary and secondary structures in primitive

and traditional political system and the secondary structures have modern (specific, universalistic and achievement) features" Almond. **One point is to be emphasised here:** Riggs's classification is important from standpoints more than one. Riggs is quite justified when he says that any comparative analysis must take into account the ecological aspect because it has clear influence upon politics. This is the central idea of Riggsian model of comparative political analysis.

### **Fused-Prismatic-Diffracted Model**

Already noted that Riggs's famous model *agraria* and *industria* was faced with criticisms and he subsequently admitted certain drawbacks of his model. But he was sure that public administration cannot be properly and fruitfully analysed ignoring the influence of environment upon the state activities and administration. He, therefore, decided to revise his earlier theory in the light of criticism and experience he gathered from the study of public administration of states.

In 1975 he wrote another book—*Prismatic Society Revisited*. He thought that the real societies are never **one dimensional**. In other words, the societies of the real world cannot be explained simply in the light of *agraria* and *industria*. There are different types of societies many of which remain beyond his model. In order to make his theory more *comprehensive and realistic* a new model is required to be devised and this he did in his new book *Prismatic Society Revisited*. He has said that the societies of the real world may be divided into three categories or types and these are **fused, prismatic, and diffracted**. This model is known as **Fused-Prismatic- Diffracted** model. Modern societies are not one dimensional, rather three dimensional.

In Riggs's view all modern societies are diffused so far as their functions are concerned. In other words, they perform various types of functions. It is applicable to all modern and non-modern societies. When the function is criterion the societies may conveniently be called *fused*. He further says modern societies are functionally diffracted. Diffraction means the process by which a beam of light or other system of waves is spread out as a result of passing through a narrow aperture or across an edge. In between fused and diffracted societies there is a third type and it is prismatic. The term prismatic conveys the following meaning. Prismatic means relating to or having the form of prism and the word prism denotes a solid geometric figure whose two ends are similar or equal. It is a transparent object in this form.

What Riggs means by Fused-Prismatic-Diffracted model. In his revised version Riggs has said that some societies perform certain specific functions and these societies are termed "functionally specific". Of course, there may occur minor changes in the function. But generally the society's functions are confined within limits. Let us now see what is meant by "fused" society. In his view, when the societies are functionally diffused they are called "fused" societies. If the societies are functionally specific they are called diffracted. There are some societies which are in-between fused and diffracted—**these are called prismatic**.

The Riggsian model says that in the real world there are three types of societies —fused-prismatic-diffracted. In his judgment these are the ideal types of societies found in the real world. This modification reveals that Riggs's earlier model was not the correct picture. While

preparing this model Riggs thoroughly studied the social, political and administrative structures of all countries— particularly the newly independent states of Asia and Africa. Riggs also refers to the ***sala model of administration***. Sala means administrative sub-system of prismatic societies. The new model of Riggs is highly complicated and many people have raised doubt's about the **authenticity of this model**.

### **Prismatic Society**

We have already explained that the prismatic society stands in-between fused and diffracted societies. That is, these are intermediate societies and the number of such societies is quite large. For this reason we want to throw light on various aspects of the prismatic society. Since sala is an administrative sub-system of prismatic society the name of the whole model is *prismatic-sala-model*. The term *sala* is a Spanish word. It means a room or a pavilion or a government office or a religious meeting. It represents an interlocking mixture of elements from the diffracted office and the fused chamber. Fred Riggs explains the term in this way. In his analytical system *sala* has no separate or independent existence. It is an indispensable part of the prismatic society. The prismatic society discharges its functions through the mechanism of *sala*. Since the number of prismatic society is comparatively large, Riggs has given maximum importance to it. According to Fred Riggs, the prismatic societies have three characteristic features. These are *overlapping*, *heterogeneity* and, finally, *formalism*.

***Overlapping*** is an important feature of prismatic-sala type of society. The meaning of overlapping is extend overseas to cover partly. Riggs explains the term in the following way. It says "The extent to which formally differentiated structures of a diffracted society co-exist with undifferentiated structures of a fused society". Riggs wants to say that the structures of diffracted society have their fixed or manifest duties or functions and, naturally, there is no scope of overlapping. On the other hand, the fused type of societies have fixed only one set of structures and, naturally, there is no scope of overlapping, that is one cannot interfere with the other. But the prismatic societies have certain special characteristics. In such societies new structures are created to meet the new demands of people. But side by side, the old structures maintain their existence. Thus both old and new structures exist side by side. The newly created structures are known as *modern*. Both types of structures perform their respective duties. However, the conflict between old and new or traditional and modern structures may sometimes crop up. This is inevitable. The functions of these two types of structures overlap and Riggs says that it is bound to happen. The states of Asia and Africa who were colonies and have achieved freedom in the second half of the last century fall under this category.

*Heterogeneity* is another feature of prismatic-sala model of society. A very important feature of this type of society is heterogeneity. Quite different types of systems, cultures, practices and viewpoints exist side by side. This type of feature is generally found in transitional societies. There are uneven social changes, different social cultures, religious faiths—and conflict among them. There are, on the one hand, educated and sophisticated classes and, on the other hand, uneducated or less educated people. The educated and intellectual class lives its life in Western style and Western culture. This class has no sympathy for indigenous culture. On the other hand, the indigenous group leads its life according to old culture and life style. The influence of

this heterogeneity very often falls upon the administration. The state authority cannot ban any group or culture and the public administration is allowed to cope with this heterogeneity. The sala is also formed in the background of this heterogeneity.

Finally, there is *formalism*. Formalism is excessive adherence to prescribed forms or excessive concern with form rather than content. Riggs uses the term in the following manner. He says : Formalism is "the degree of discrepancy or congruence between the formally prescribed and effectively practiced, between norms and realities". If there is difference or discrepancy between the formal aspects and the effectiveness the system will be treated as formal. Riggs has said that the prismatic society is more formal in comparison with fused and diffracted societies. He has said that the officers or administrators of a prismatic society adhere to the literal meaning of laws and statutes and this mentality very often affects the normal functioning of public administration, people's interest is also adversely affected.

The love for formalism may be traced by several factors. The administrators are generally less interested in the welfare activities or maintenance or furtherance of people's interest and welfare. The main interest of the officers centres around the idea of service, that is, how to keep the service, and how to get promotion. The administrators of prismatic societies are very much prone to corruption and, in order to cover it up, they try to be more and more formal. Riggs aptly observes "**Thus formalism generally joins with the process of official corruption.**" The love of the administrators for formalism or excessive formality has sometimes been a great hindrance to rapid progress of society. Analysis of the prismatic society reveals that, in many cases, the formalistic attitude of the bureaucrats stands on the way of progress.

### **Prismatic Society Features**

A prismatic society, according to Fred Riggs, is always in transition—it may be called a *transitional society*. A prismatic society always changes. The underdeveloped or developing nations of Asia and Africa fall in this category. The concept of stability is not generally found. There is always an interaction between old and new ideas and when people are faced with new or any novel fashion or behaviour they accept it or express desire to accept it. This proclivity of people or a section of people creates tension or conflict because a section of people or even a part of public administration does not accept the demand of men which comes to be a source of conflict. Riggs has said that conflict or tension among people is a very common feature of a prismatic society.

A prismatic society is also a polycommunal society. Riggs calls the poly- communal character of society "*Clects*". The speciality of poly-communality of a prismatic society is there are many ethnic groups or religious and cultural groups and the relation among these groups is not always cordial. Rather, hostility among the ethnic, cultural or religious groups is very common. According to Riggs, the groups based on ethnicity or religion or culture may reasonably be called "Clects". Each elect or communal group has its own outlook and objective which is the prime cause of conflict among the groups or "Clects". Since one group or elect is different from another, each elect or group performs its own functions and there are differences in functions of various groups which, finally, lead to tension or conflict among the Clects.



The system of sala may briefly be analysed because in a prismatic society the sala has a special importance. I have already referred to sala. Though it is a Spanish term Fred Riggs has used it in English to mean a *subsystem of public administration*. In a prismatic society there exists or may exist a democratically elected government and each department is headed by a minister who is the sole policy-maker. But the prismatic society has also an administrative department or sub-department and Riggs calls it sala. Since a prismatic society is also polycommunal or poly-ethnic or poly-religious society the head administrator and the minister may belong to different communal or ethnic or religious groups and this situation may be apple of discord between the minister and officer. The fact is that since the minister is a politician and claims no administrative experience he largely depends on the sala official and the result is the sala officer has extensive participation in the policy making process. In fact, the sala officer, in one way or other, dominates the whole administrative structure.

Riggs has drawn our attention to another aspect of a prismatic society and its sala model. The sala officer may belong to a particular communal group and by virtue of this he will have sympathy or weakness for his community and simultaneously try to influence the administration for his community. This situation may create an atmosphere of conflict or tension between the minister and the sala official. In sala system the sala officer in matter of recruitment may show favour to his particular communal or religious group. This is a potential source of nepotism.

In sala system of prismatic society there may exist the *absence of unanimity* or sources of conflict of old and emerging systems coexist, but this very often comes to be the source of conflict between groups and community. This results in an absence of unanimity. In almost all the emerging or newly independent nations of Asia and Africa this form of conflict is very common and Riggs calls these societies prismatic. The conflict between old and new or between two or more communal groups is rather a very common affair. Again, there is conflict between legal and non-legal centres of power. Sometimes non-legal centres of power dominate the social system.

Riggs has drawn our attention to another aspect of a prismatic society. First of all, there is a type of imbalance between political administrators (who are ministers) and sala administrators (who are bureaucrats). The political leaders or ministers are supposed to be policy-makers. But, in fact, the sala officers (or bureaucrats) actually do this job. In most of the case to the ministers accept this process. But when a minister refuses to accept it the conflict happens to be inevitable. This creates an imbalanced administrative structure.

Riggs has further said that the dominance of sala officials and comparatively weak position of ministers create a favourable situation for the development of corruption. Taking the opportunity of the weakness of minister the sala officer resorts to corrupt practices to support his own community or ethnic group. The public administration of a prismatic society is characterised as weak and partial. The bureaucracy is all-powerful and it hardly possesses any sort of accountability to anybody. Sala has the features of nepotism and maladministration.

## Evaluation

We have thoroughly discussed the important aspects of Riggsian model of public administration. That is, the intimate relationship between public administration and ecology. Critics are of opinion that if anybody goes thoroughly into the Riggsian model it will be clear that, in the entire system of public administration, ecology is a very important factor and no other element, even the bureaucracy, has anything to do. But the actual situation offers us a different picture. Though ecology or environment has an important role the other factors must be taken into account.

The prismatic society is always in transition which means that internal changes in the society are always taking place and ecology or environment is so active that Weberian bureaucratic model appears to be fully insignificant. To put it in other words, bureaucracy in Riggsian model is no factor of public administration. But this is not correct. In the prismatic society the *sala* has crucial role to play. The Riggsian model depicts the role or importance of *sala*. We hold the view that though ecology or environment largely controls the administrative system of prismatic society the importance of *sala* or bureaucracy cannot be minimised.

Remesh K Arora, in his article *Riggs's Administrative Ecology*, has tried to build up a bridge between Weberian bureaucratic model and Riggs's prismatic model in the following way: "Weber described essentially the characteristics of bureaucracy which evolved as a result of certain kinds of a socio-economic development. Riggs, on the other hand, seems to be seeking explanation of why similar bureaucratic development does not emerge rapidly in present day developing countries ... Like Weber, Riggs has provided three ideal type constructs which are essentially deductive in character. While the basis of Weberian categories is the type of legitimacy associated with an authority system, Riggsian typology is based on the criterion of structural differentiation, which differs from Weber's qualitatively distinct ideal type"

Critics are of the view that there are large number of newly independent countries whose social, cultural and other sub-systems are prismatic but the bureaucratic system or the entire administrative structure corresponds to diffracted (that is *functionally specific structure*). During the colonial rule the bureaucratic administration of the colonies was quite efficient and even after the end of colonial rule the efficiency of bureaucracy has remained intact. **For example, the Indian bureaucracy is fully a legacy of British system of bureaucracy and after 1947 this bureaucratic rule has practically remained intact. The only difference is British bureaucracy has been Indianised.**

The categorisation of societies into fused, diffracted and prismatic is novel no doubt. We are of opinion that today a society may be called diffracted and after few years nobody knows what would be its real character. A prismatic society may also change. Again, critics have said that in a diffracted society or fused society poly-communalism may exist. We have seen that in some countries of Western Europe there are number of ethnic or cultural groups and they are constantly fighting each other.

We also do not agree with the terms used by Fred Riggs. Ordinary readers may be confused with the words such as *sala*. It is a Spanish word. Again, the terms diffracted and fused are sometimes sources of confusion. He might have used commonly known terms.

The prismatic society can never be the permanent feature of any geographical area. Prismatic means a society in transition. But the economic, political and social character of a state may undergo rapid changes. Particularly under the impact of globalisation or liberalisation the economic, political and social conditions of every state is rapidly changing. We can say that prismaticism is a temporary feature of a state. The political socialisation is rapidly progressing and no single feature can be a permanent one.

Riggs has depicted mainly the negative aspects of prismatic society. But such societies may also have some positive characteristics. Riggs, while characterising the nature of a prismatic society, was overwhelmingly influenced by Western systems and methods. This is his drawback.

Riggs is correct when he says that in a prismatic society there is an absence of coordination among the various departments or structures. But the same thing shall be found even in diffracted societies. Critics have said that this opinion of Riggs is simply an *oversimplification*.

The Riggsian model is important because he has admitted that public administration is an important part of environment and this reminds us of Easton's general system theory or Almond's concept of public administration.

