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Our government's declared mantra for the country is minimum government and maximum governance. This mantra has been articulated a number of times by our present leaders, particularly the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi. It is a good idea indeed; it stands for the minimum exercise of power and authority and maximum amount of service delivered to the people. We are an independent country and a free people. But how many people actually enjoy the fruits of independence and freedom? Certainly not all. We have to ensure that every citizen feels proud of his freedom and is proud of his country. But this is possible only when tears from every citizen's eyes are wiped and he is assured of an honourable and minimum level of decent living in the land governed by himself through the power of vote.

This is the minimum ideal we have to strive to achieve. For this purpose we will have to recast our policies, reorient our approaches and remould strategies of development. In this task the first and foremost priority will have to be given to the streamlining of the working of our implementation agencies, in short, the civil administration. In other words, we will have to make our administration more responsive and more sensitive to the needs, hopes and aspirations of the people.

Sadly indeed, that our bureaucracy has all along been characterized by the approaches of colonial times. Our administration has not yet fully extricated itself from the old grooves. The sorrows and sufferings of the people do sparingly seem striking responsive chords in their hearts. Sense of service and sacrifice for the weak and the down-trodden has not yet dawned on them. It is true that very many of the members of our bureaucracy, that is, the administration, have certainly espoused the ideal of service of the people, but a large number of them are yet to realize that they are servants and not the masters of the people. They cannot afford to be irresponsible, unaccountable, insensitive and unresponsive to the needs, hopes and aspiration of the people.

Since the achievement of independence billions and trillions of rupees

have been spent on poverty alleviation programmes and certainly in the files of administration a sizable section of the weaker people has been shown having been helped to rise above penurious conditions. But do we find that something substantially has been achieved on the ground? Those in power have been busy in consolidating their hold on the government and its machinery feeling little concerned about the penury and privations of the mute masses.