

**Jnana Prabodhini Competitive Examinations Centre,  
Pune.**

**Celebrating journey of its alumnus  
on account of  
Tridashakpurti Varsha 2025-26  
(30 years of establishment)**

**Shri. Aniruddha Jewlikar**

- Presently, working as Deputy Secretary, Urban Development Department, Govt of Maharashtra
- Section Officer MPSC - 1999 Batch
- JPCEC - 1997 Batch
- BA (Economics) - Batch of 1994
- MBA (Finance)
- Former Merchant Navy officer - 1991 to 1997
- Previously worked at Land Records, Public Health, Planning, Home and various other Departments under different responsibilities.



Aniruddha Jewlikar is currently serving as a Deputy Secretary to the Government of Maharashtra. He was selected through the Maharashtra Public Service Commission Exam (MPSC) in 1999.

**An Unconventional Path to Civil Service**

Aniruddha's educational and professional background before joining the civil services was notably "unconventional". His basic schooling was completed in Pune at Shri Shivaji Preparatory Military School. After finishing his 12th standard, Aniruddha had a strong desire to join the defence forces, but his eyesight, specifically having spectacles, prevented him from pursuing this aspiration. Given his fondness for the sea, he then opted for the Merchant Navy, embarking on a career that spanned from 1991 to 1998. This period provided him with valuable experience, but due to "personal issues," he eventually had to leave that profession.

At the age of 24, a time when many peers would be searching for their first job, Aniruddha found himself at a crossroads, with six to seven years of professional experience already

behind him. He began contemplating what to do next, seeking a career path that offered "stability" and opportunities to make a significant "contribution to society". While he admits that grand philanthropic thoughts were not his primary drivers initially, he recognized that a fulfilling profession should offer a combination of good pay, a sense of satisfaction, and societal status. He concluded that civil services, particularly the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) examinations, offered the ideal convergence of these elements. This realization was partly influenced by discussions with Commodore Joshi, a senior officer from the Merchant Navy, whose daughter was also attempting the UPSC exams at the time.

### **At Jnana Prabodhini**

With his home in Pune, Aniruddha learned about Jnana Prabodhini Competitive Examination Centre, a recently started institution for civil services preparation. He joined Jnana Prabodhini in July 1997. He distinctly remembers his first day, a Thursday, attending a class led by Godbole Sir. He was five minutes late, in spite of a warning from the then-admission officer, Revati Pardeshi Madam, that there would be a penalty of a one-rupee if he arrived late for the class. He paid the fine to Ms Vidyut Varkhedkar, the co-ordinator, for his tardiness. This was the first lesson that JPCEC imbibed in him, "**Honour the commitment**". Despite being somewhat established as a navigating officer in the Merchant Navy, the world of civil services was entirely different. He noted that his previous profession had kept him largely disconnected from daily civic life; he even recalled not knowing that Atal Bihari Vajpayee's first government of 13 days had fallen until much later.

Aniruddha's initial experience in Godbole Sir's class was one of profound realization and self-awareness. For two and a half hours, he couldn't utter a single word, leading his classmates to mistakenly believe he didn't know English. The truth was more humbling: he lacked basic knowledge about current affairs, such as who the President, Chief Minister, or Prime Minister were. This stark awareness of his limited general knowledge left him deeply "embarrassed" and "afraid".

He attributes "150% credit" for his eventual success to Godbole Sir, emphasizing the profound impact of his teachings. Godbole Sir imparted crucial skills, particularly the art of reading newspapers. Aniruddha highlights the challenge of discerning truth from "fake news" even then, comparing it to the "adulteration" prevalent in the media. He recounts another fellow student, Shirish Shitole, who used to say that news was often a "bhangad," a chaotic

mix, because it contained "bhanmati" (illusion), "nagara" (drums), "gadgada" (rumble), and "damru" (drum) – elements designed to create sensation. However, Godbole Sir taught him "to read between the lines" and "understand things". He learned that a political news story often carries significant economic, social, and cultural implications. This understanding, instilled over two decades ago, remains invaluable to Aniruddha, who still prefers reading newspapers to watching news channels.

Godbole Sir's philosophy was that an instructor's role is to "show the path" to the candidate, but the candidate "has to go on the path" themselves. Aniruddha stresses the importance of that initial guide, which Godbole Sir was for him. Even after so many years, Aniruddha admits that he still feels intimidated and struggles to speak confidently in front of Godbole Sir, a testament to the lasting impact and respect he holds for his mentor.

Aniruddha appeared for four UPSC attempts from 1997 to 2000, reaching the interview stage twice, but unfortunately, he was not ultimately selected. During this period, he was selected for the Maharashtra Public Service Commission (MPSC). He was selected as a Section Officer in the Ministry. He joined the service in 2002.

Aniruddha describes the situation of civil service preparation in Pune during his time (late 1990s to early 2000s) as "infant". Information was scarce; UPSC preliminary exam results, for instance, would only be known two days after their release, usually from the Press Information Bureau office behind Jnana Prabodhini. Alternatively, if someone had a contact in Delhi at coaching centers, they might get the information. Mobile phones were not prevalent then, further limiting access to information.

When Aniruddha joined, his class at Prabodhini had only about 15 students. He joined a few days after the batch had started, indicating how small and nascent the ecosystem was. There was no "critical mass" of students or large coaching groups. Students largely had to "find their own way". Prabodhini served as a "platform" where such students could gather. Most people in Pune at that time could not afford or were hesitant to spend money to go to Delhi for classes. Aniruddha recalls that during his time, one or two selected candidates like Santosh Vaidya, who had come to Prabodhini would offer guidance. The teachers were predominantly college professors.

He notes that over his four years of preparation, the landscape began to change. Classes for UPSC started to increase in Pune, and they began attracting students who had good optional subjects like Political Science and History. Even basic concepts like Political Science being different from Indian Polity were not widely known. This period was also marked by forging strong friendships, like with Ganesh Bare, with whom he studied extensively. Aniruddha contrasts the "camaraderie" then and "self-centered, self-focused" attitude he sometimes observes today. In his time at Prabodhini, there was a strong sense of community, with students studying together, eating together, and spending evenings together.



Old memories from JP days - (Left to right) - Vidyut Varkhedkar, Aniruddha, Suvarna Deshpande, Swati Punde, Manish Ghushhe, Ganesh Bare

### **The Role of a Section Officer: Policy and Implementation**

Aniruddha clarifies a common misconception: a "Section Officer is not a post". He explains that nobody aspires to be a Section Officer while preparing for the exam. He emphasizes that he did not aim to be a Section Officer, but rather, upon MPSC selection, he was offered limited choices within Group B posts, including Section Officer, Nayab Tehsildar, and Chief Officer. He chose Section Officer and was selected for it in Maharashtra.

He describes the Section Officer as someone operating "where policy decisions are made". This is a crucial role, as policies directly impact the citizens. While collectors and commissioners focus on their districts and organizations, a Section Officer is involved in the broader picture, often preparing drafts and working policies. Aniruddha states that a Section Officer must consider existing rules and regulations, incorporate their own understanding,

innovate, follow instructions from seniors, and draw upon their experience. He is like a Lego piece. A crucial and fundamental building block in a complex system.

A Section Officer typically supervises a small staff, usually two or three assistants, and sometimes up to five. The Section Officer handles a substantial part of policy creation, which impacts the entire state. Aniruddha laments that this job's importance is often underestimated, and even those performing it may not fully grasp its impact.

He illustrates the work with a detailed example of the "ESIS" (Employees' State Insurance Scheme). Aniruddha explains that this scheme provides health insurance for workers in industrial establishments employing more than ten people. He mentions being responsible for the policy, infrastructure, and manpower related to ESIS, his work involved gathering "raw material," preparing drafts, and developing working policies. This often entailed extensive study of various subjects and resolving complex issues.

Aniruddha provides another vivid example of a Section Officer's impact, recalling an incident involving the 108 ambulance service. He recounts the initiation of this service in Andhra Pradesh during the tenure of the then-Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu. The service aimed to ensure ambulances reached a patient within an hour, significantly increasing survival chances. Aniruddha, along with another Section Officer, was sent to Andhra Pradesh to study this project. They also examined its implementation of the scheme in Gujarat and Assam. Their findings, documented in a detailed report, influenced the cabinet's decision. This exemplifies how Section Officers conduct in-depth studies and prepare comprehensive policy documents that form the basis for state-level decisions.

He also shared an experience related to mental health. While working in the public health department, he visited mental hospitals in the state. He discovered a disturbing trend: some female patients at one of the mental institutions were admitted for two and a half months, and then discharged to be readmitted a month later. There was a loophole where if a person was not presented before a judge within a certain period (e.g., 90 days), they had to be discharged. People would admit their spouses, discharge them just before the deadline, and then re-admit them after 15 days, creating a continuous cycle of forced detention. Aniruddha emphasized that a Section Officer's finding in a file, based on such observations and analysis, holds significant weight and can expose systemic issues.

Regarding inter-departmental coordination, Aniruddha states that a Section Officer's direct interaction with other departments is not extensive. The primary department they constantly engage with is the Finance Department, for budget and planning matters. While there might be occasional interaction with departments like Environment for initiatives such as Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, major inter-departmental interactions are limited for a Section Officer.

### **Hierarchical Progression and Ministerial Experience**

The typical promotional hierarchy for a Section Officer is to Under Secretary, then Deputy Secretary and finally Joint Secretary. Aniruddha was promoted to Under Secretary in 2014.

Working at the ministerial level, particularly directly with a minister, presents a distinct experience compared to being a Section Officer. Aniruddha categorizes officers who go to a minister's office into four types: those who seek to avoid work and just manage the minister's schedule or postal duties; those who are agents, looking for personal gain from tenders; those who seek power or influence through connections; and a "very small" fourth group who genuinely want to work. The perception of the ministerial office depends entirely on one's objective.

Aniruddha's experience as Under Secretary began when he was chosen to work with the then-Public Health Minister, Dr. Deepak Sawant.

Working with Dr. Sawant was a positive experience because the minister himself was a "thinking minister". Dr. Sawant, himself a medical practitioner with a PhD in nutrition, had a deep understanding of health issues. He consistently worked on public health matters like malnutrition in tribal areas such as Melghat, Palghar, Gondia, and Gadchiroli. Aniruddha found it rewarding to work under a minister who understood the "impact" of their work. Dr. Sawant's aspiration was always to be the Health Minister, and he had conducted extensive research even before assuming office. And has subsequently continued even after remitting the office.

In contrast, when a minister lacks interest, the officer's personal space to initiate work significantly diminishes. While a department offers some scope for suo motu action, the minister's office provides very little such space.

Aniruddha's promotion to Deputy Secretary happened around 2021. As Deputy Secretary, the "scope of work increases significantly". He explains that while a Section Officer does the "original work" (preparing documents, even with mistakes), an Under Secretary's role is to scrutinize and correct those documents. For instance, as a Desk Officer (Under Secretary), Aniruddha initially had only three subjects: Cyber Crime, NDPS (Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act), and the Prevention of Corruption Act. But as a Deputy Secretary, additional subjects like Prison were added.

The responsibility also shifts. While an Under Secretary is not solely responsible for originating work, a Deputy Secretary is considered the "link between the Secretary and the department". They represent the department in meetings with the Chief Secretary, ministers, or even the Chief Minister when the Secretary cannot attend. At this level, there is "no scope" for answers like "I will check and inform you". Aniruddha now supervises three to four Under Secretaries, who in turn each manage two Section Officers, meaning he heads the entire original work chain. While now he does not "prepare anything original" himself, his role requires intense focus because even a five-page note from a Section Officer is based on "25 pages of raw material" that he must conceptually understand. His experience and imagination are crucial at this level. He acts as an "interface" between the Minister's office, the department, the Secretary, Central departments, and other state departments. Aniruddha concludes that although the number of Deputy Secretaries in Maharashtra is relatively small, their amount of responsibility is higher compared to other officers.

### **Challenging and Traumatic Experiences**

Aniruddha has faced numerous challenging experiences throughout his career. After working in the Public Health Department, he moved to the Home Department, where he handled sensitive and "confidential subjects" like narcotics, smuggling, and cybercrime. These subjects were so confidential that he couldn't even discuss them during a tea break at the office.

A particularly difficult and traumatic experience occurred in 2011-12 while he was in the Public Health Department. A chain of bomb blasts happened at Zhaveri Bazaar in Mumbai. At around 6:15 PM, a meeting was ongoing at his office when news of the bomb blast broke. The then-Secretary, Mr. Jayant Kumar Banthia, immediately formed teams of two officers

each and dispatched them to various hospitals (KEM, JJ, GT, Saifee) to manage the influx of patients, dead bodies, and grieving relatives.

Aniruddha was assigned to Saifee Hospital, located near Charni Road station. His role involved providing comfort and reassurance to the injured and their families. He describes the immense emotional toll this took on him, questioning if he could sustain his own composure while trying to calm others. He had to deal with gravely injured individuals, including one person whose leg was completely severed. Ten minutes after seeing this stretcher pass, he learned that the patient's 10-year-old daughter was searching for her father. Comforting the child and her mother, assuring them that her father would be fine, required immense communication skills and temperament. Aniruddha confesses that he, too, experienced significant psychological trauma, similar to the doctors, and it affected him for many days. He stayed at the hospital for two days and nights. During such incidents, communication with family was difficult due to the lack of modern mobile phones, adding to the distress. He describes it as a "very different experience" from his regular administrative work.

### **Navigating Generational Gaps and Technological Shifts**

Aniruddha also reflects on the evolving dynamics of working with juniors, especially with the rapid advancement of technology. He observes that the "quality of manpower" joining the civil services today is not as good as it used to be. He recalls that when he joined as a Section Officer, his assistants, who were clerks, had more experience than he did, and their understanding of files, policy, and proposals was superior to his.

However, he acknowledges the positive impact of technology. He remembers a time when using computers was uncommon in government offices. He recounts an instance where a senior officer asked him to send a document in Word format, but their office didn't have licensed MS software. They used Corel and Lotus, which were incompatible with MS Word.

In contrast, today's young recruits, even assistants, are often highly educated, with mechanical engineering or PhD backgrounds. Their "understanding of the world is much better," particularly with technology. However, Aniruddha notes a challenge: while they are intelligent and adept with technology, they sometimes lack "application" or "experience". He praises some exceptional new officers, who leverage technology effectively.

He emphasizes that alongside intelligence and technology, "hard work" and a "willingness to learn" are crucial. He finds that while young officers are good at hard work, they sometimes struggle with "brain work" or "thinking". The core work of the ministry involves policy writing, which requires "writing skills" that come only with practice and experience. While mechanical jobs can be done by anyone, the "understanding" and ability to "prepare project reports" (like for Metro rail, studying examples from Sydney or New York) require deeper thought and experience.

Technology has brought significant improvements in administrative efficiency. Aniruddha highlights the transformation from physical files to entirely computerized offices with laptops. Previously, files would get lost or stuck, and tracking their progress was impossible. Now, with digital systems, it's clear who submitted a file, how long it was pending, and at whose desk it currently rests. This transparency and speed are major advantages.

### **Evolution of Public Administration and Citizen Awareness**

Aniruddha also shares some broader observations on the changes in public administration over the past 20-25 years, some of which he views as "negative". He points out a significant increase in citizen awareness regarding their rights and the process of lodging complaints. Earlier, the ministry might receive five complaints a day; now, it receives a hundred. This increased awareness is a "positive aspect," indicating that people are more informed and empowered.

However, the "negative" side is that 95 out of these 100 complaints could have been resolved at the local level (e.g., village or municipal council) but were not. This forces citizens to come all the way to Mantralaya, often for issues that the ministry cannot directly resolve, Aniruddha would then have to forward the complaint back to the municipal council, leading to further bureaucratic delays. This indicates a failure at the local administration level, where officials are often overburdened or unresponsive. While he can expedite the process from the ministry, it doesn't solve the fundamental problem of local governance. He mentions that among these 95 complaints, about 25 are often false.

He also discusses the rise of "RTI (Right to Information) activists" over the last 15 years, whom he sometimes refers to as a "new breed" of "blackmailers". These individuals often flood departments with RTI requests, even when the information is not genuinely needed,

sometimes to harass officials. He notes that even the Information Commissioner had to issue orders to not entertain habitual RTI applicants. While general public awareness has increased positively, the behaviour of some individuals can be problematic.

### **A Vision for Urban Development and the Future**

Aniruddha expresses a strong desire to undertake "a thousand things" in his remaining career. Currently, in the Urban Development Department, he holds a broad vision for cities, especially his native Pune, which he feels has developed chaotically. He observes that Pune, like Mumbai, is a "magnet city" attracting people due to opportunities, unlike cities like Nanded or Yavatmal. While comprehensive planning is ideal, it is "practically impossible" to execute perfectly due to political and administrative challenges.

He reflects on his childhood in Pune, recalling how Hadapsar was once envisioned as the next developing area but was surpassed by Hinjewadi, driven by the IT sector. Aniruddha believes that for such IT parks, essential infrastructure like water supply and sewage treatment must be planned meticulously, ensuring that wastewater doesn't pollute rivers. This is a complex task requiring the efforts of "two to three generations".

He cites South Korea as an example, where Seoul—a magnet city—houses about 2.5 million people within a national population of 5.5 million. In 1980, Mumbai and Seoul were not qualitatively different, only differing in population size. However, from 1982 onward, South Korea, now an acknowledged Asian Tiger, made massive investments in infrastructure, particularly in water management. Korea uses separate pipelines for drinking water and for non-potable uses such as flushing, washing, and gardening. This treated non-potable water comes from treatment plants and, based on his personal testing, is cleaner than bottled water. He calls it "criminal" that India still uses costly potable water for flushing, especially given its immense population pressure—highlighting the urgent need for better resource management.

Regarding water management, he states that 135 liters of water are consumed per capita per day, and 80% of this goes back into the system as wastewater after flushing, bathing, washing dishes, and gardening. The goal is to reduce fresh water consumption by 20% by 2047, by reusing treated water. Another major challenge is solid waste management. In most places (90%), waste is not segregated, despite campaigns. He mentions Indore as an example, where

waste is segregated into eight types (dry, wet, electrical, biomedical, etc.), while in India, even basic wet and dry segregation is lacking.



Aniruddha along with colleagues at a study tour to Seoul, South Korea to understand its waste management practices.

Their planning for cities with over one million population (like Mumbai, Pune, Nagpur, Nashik) focuses on "Waste-to-Energy" projects using methods like methanation or gasification. For smaller cities producing around 200 tons of waste per day, like Satara, they promote sustainable waste-to-energy projects. He highlights Nagpur Municipal Corporation's success in treating wastewater and supplying it to power plants for heat generation.

Aniruddha notes that Maharashtra is currently the "most urbanized state" in India, with over 50% of its population living in cities. Of this urban population, 80% (or 40% of Maharashtra's total population) resides in major metropolitan regions like MMR (Mumbai Metropolitan Region), PMR (Pune Metropolitan Region), and Nashik. This creates immense pressure on resources. While some envision "third Mumbai" or "fourth Mumbai," such satellite cities are long-term projects, like Navi Mumbai, which was conceived in 1972 but is still developing. This long-term planning is essential, however, given the continuous population growth in urban centers.

### **Insights for Civil Service Aspirants and the Imperative of Competence**

Aniruddha has unfortunately had less contact with the civil service examination centre since he joined the service, but he offers crucial advice for aspirants. He emphasizes the critical need for a "Plan B". He has seen many friends who lacked an alternative plan and became disheartened if they weren't selected. He believes that a Plan B is essential, even for himself.

He advocates for aspirants to develop "competence" in an alternative field, suggesting that if they don't succeed in civil services within a certain period, they should be able to transition to a company.

He highlights a key challenge once selected for civil service: the tendency to become complacent. Since government jobs are secure, there's often less incentive to improve competence continuously. Aniruddha believes that once one joins a department, they must master its rules and regulations and not be dependent on others. He recalls a constant source of inspiration from his Merchant Navy days, his captain, Captain Nag. Captain Nag's philosophy was that an officer must be capable of troubleshooting and solving problems independently. Aniruddha recounts an incident where he, as a cadet, didn't know how to fix a light, and Captain Nag reprimanded him, stressing the importance of being self-reliant.

Aniruddha's core message is that whatever job one does, they should strive to be the best at it. Whether it's cooking or engineering, the product or service should be "number one in the world". Similarly, in a government department like Health, one should work to bring positive change for both the department and the public. Competence is not acquired in a day; it requires daily effort, as new questions and challenges constantly arise. Passing an examination is not the end; it's the beginning.

He stresses the need for "technical knowledge of the department, technical knowledge of the project, rules, and regulations". Without this knowledge, one becomes dependent and susceptible to being misled. For instance, an engineer in the PWD or a Collector needs to understand the intricacies of project financing, including capital expenditure, revenue recovery, and IRR (Internal Rate of Return), which he believes is not always the "right marker" for project viability. While passing exams like MPSC or UPSC is commendable, true competence in one's subject is paramount. He concludes by stating that a "wise person can earn money" and that money cannot be earned without wisdom.

## Photo Gallery



Aniruddha with wife Anushka and son Atharva.



Aniruddha with Dr. Vivek & Dr. Savita Kulkarni and Shri. Santosh Rokade, currently Deputy Secretary, MTDC (also a JPCEC alumnus)



Hon. President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu, awarding officials of Maharashtra for 1st rank in Swachh Sarvekshan 2023.



Aniruddha on behalf of Govt of Maharashtra, being awarded Swacch Sarvekshan 2022, by the then Hon. Minister MoHUA, Shri Hardeep Singh Puri.



With then CM Shri Eknath Shinde, during the Ashadhi Ekadashi Yatra where Aniruddha was appointed as nodal officer.



With former Chief Secretary of Maharashtra, Smt. Sujata Saunik.. Aniruddha was her OSD in one of his tenures.



Aniruddha, wife Anushka with an old JP friend, Shri. Kiran Gitte - IAS, currently serving as Secretary, Govt of Tripura.



With fellow JPCEC friends Vikrant Bagade and Vidyut Varkhedkar.



Aniruddha along with other JPCEC Batchmates during the Book Publication ceremony of Shri. Samarendra Nimbalkar, a JPCEC Alumnus and currently working as Judge in NALSA.



JPCEC bondings turning into lifelong family bondings. Aniruddha and family with JPCEC friends and their family.



Aniruddha with volunteers of Nirmal Wari. Volunteers who follow the Wari route and clean the route after Wari passes from a particular place. A different kind of service to God and society.



Embracing spirit of Warkari traditions.