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He has served as a member of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and held several positions from 1979 to 2007. During his tenure as the head of the Urban Transport division of the Government of India, he authored India's National Urban Transport Policy, a document that outlines the priorities for sustainable urban transport at all levels of government.

O.P. holds a PhD from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi, a Master's degree in Transportation from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, USA and a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering from IIT, Chennai. At WRI India, Agarwal will be leading the office's ongoing efforts to strengthen its work around cities, energy, climate, landscape restoration, water, and government and business engagement.

He teaches the course on Public Private Partnership and Urban Governance in Advanced Management Programme in Public Policy.