



FOUNDATION *for* RESTORATION of NATIONAL VALUES

ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः। सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः।
सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु। मा कश्चित् दुःखभाग् भवेत्।।



NEWSLETTER

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Indian Civil Services



Neutrality of Civil Service: A Myth?

By Dr. Gopal Ganesh, Vice President , FRNV

The modern Civil Service in India largely owes its origin to the British Government, which wanted to establish a firm grip over India by setting up a governance machinery , which earned the justifiable reputation of being a polished and powerful steel frame. However, the structure of the Civil Service had its Indian roots. Shri K.M. Panikkar had observed “it is on the long established system of local bureaucracy, coming down at least from the time of Kautilya that the British erected the imposing structure of their civil service.” The functions assigned to the Collector of the ICS during the British regime were not very different from those performed by the district governor of the Mauryan Period. (Jagmohan: Soul and Structure of Governance in India, 2005). In course of time, a Provincial Civil Service was created in each province, to strengthen this steel frame and also meet local aspirations for government jobs. Thus, there came into being three classes of Civil Service- the Imperial Service, the Provincial Civil Service and a Subordinate Civil Service. Similarly, services for other branches of administration, such as education, medical and public works came to be established. From the very beginning, this government machinery came to be feared and respected, for they were not only disciplined but controlled and directed practically all work at the district and at the secretariat level. Many members of the Civil Service also made notable contributions to development, history, culture and literature of this country.

The freedom struggle and the rise of the Muslim League created considerable pressure for the civil service, giving rise to uncertainty and loss of idealism. The Indian Civil Service found itself arraigned on the other side of the fence during the

freedom struggle, because it was meant to serve the rulers, viz. the British Government. Consequently, the nationalist party which formed the government after freedom did not view the civil service favorably. There were even demands for scrapping the civil service, but it was due to the diligence and sagacity of Sardar Vallabhai Patel, the Home Minister, who was aware of the crucial role the Civil Service played at the time of partition, and later for the orderly conduct of government under the new republic. He also averred that the without a good all India service, the unity of the country would be jeopardized. He had also stated during the debate in the Constituent Assembly on retention of Article 314 of the Constitution that the All India Service should have the independence to speak out its mind and for that, a sense of security was necessary.

With the passage of time, a steady decline was witnessed in every sphere of public administration, whether it was diligence, output, impartiality, objectivity or creativity. This was brought about by the lack of discipline and devotion of the political leadership and predominance give to caste, religion, and provincial interests. In a sense, while India moved towards development of infrastructure, many infirmities of the civil services surfaced, such as its inability to adjust to manifold changes in the internal and external environment of the country, through proper training and unwillingness to create devotion to work and conduct. The early political leadership was succeeded by people of lesser integrity and extraneous considerations began to weigh during process of implementation of the Five Year Plans. Principles and Efficient governance were often the victims of political expediency. Where extraneous considerations failed to go through bureaucracy, politicians resorted to blaming bureaucrats for delays and this resulted in adverse effects on morale and created hostility between the politicians and civil service. This is not to

say that many in civil service were honest and devoted. Sometimes, they were no better than the political set up. This has resulted in very few officers maintaining their integrity in the face of great odds, while many of them bent to the will of the politicians. Threats of punitive action, transfer to another place, or another post perceived to be less important, and attempts at blackmail or outright bodily harm have been used to make the civil servants toe the line. The few who still hold on to principles have been seen to suffer through harassment, frequent transfers and postings, waiting for posting etc. The situation had been compounded by caste and class based reservations. Politicians openly support officers of their caste, or class or province and this, in turn, has made officers vulnerable to gravitate towards politicians of similar caste, class or State.

It is no wonder that civil service now finds itself far removed from the idealism with which it was formed and manned for several decades. Around 1976, when Emergency was declared in the country, the majority of civil service heeded to the call of the political powers for being 'committed.' Many atrocities were committed with the connivance of the government machinery and even the judiciary did not demur. Subsequently, the Shah Commission enquired into the excesses committed during the Emergency period and found many officers guilty. All these developments have led to a crisis of governance in the country. It is not as if no move has been made to reform civil services. On the contrary, even after two Administrative Reforms Commission reports, precious little has been done to reform the civil services and bring back the earlier ethos of devotion and discipline. Governments in power have ensured that these recommendations are largely confined to the dustbin of history. The political class has revealed to be highly self motivated without much care for the well being of the country. Governments in power have disregarded recommendations of Administrative Reforms Commissions to lay down a Code of Conduct for MPs/MLAs or train them suitably in ethics and parliamentary procedures.

Some recent incidents, where top civil servants have identified themselves with the ruling political classes, have given rise to the need for neutrality of civil services. One example was where the Director General of Police of a State sat on dharna along with the Chief Minister of the State to protest against the actions of the Central Bureau of Investigation. Should he have done that, especially when the action contemplated by the CBI was against him? Till this moment, he has not been punished for this act of indiscipline and conduct unbecoming of a police officer.

Other examples are the conduct of officers in the Cattle feed scandal of Bihar, the Vyapam Scandal of Madhya Pradesh, the 2G scandal in Communications Ministry, and the Coal Allocation Scandal in the Ministry of Coal. Some have been punished certainly, but the ease with which they aligned with their political bosses to loot the treasury raises serious questions on the extent to which matters have deteriorated. One is entitled to ask "Where is the neutrality of Civil Service? Is the famed neutrality of the Civil Service only a myth?" Another related question is the quality of political leadership that the present system has brought about. Are present day politicians capable of possessing a larger vision for the country's prosperity rather than being consumed by parochial interests? Are they sufficiently trained in legislative and administrative matters so that when in power, they may provide mature guidance to the civil service? Is the present system of elections encouraging money power and subsequent corruption? These are questions that need to be answered by everyone imbued with national spirit and freedom is to prevail in the country.

NEWS & EVENTS

❑ *On February 16, 2019, the expert panel on Value Education Curriculum met in FRNV Office. During the meeting, it was decided that the content should be simple and age appropriate. The focus should be on concrete values for the primary classes. Various methodology need to be considered for imparting values, such as Story/Play based; Activities based- song, dance, play, game, outdoor; Instruction based and Festival/ events based.*

❑ *FRNV filed a PIL in the High Court of Kerala regarding the unprecedented floods that affected very adversely in certain parts of Kerala which were due to omissions and commissions by the authorities. These omissions and commissions were brought before the Hon'ble Court. The PIL was found necessary as no action was taken by the State Government in spite of FRNV agitating before the State Govt. the need for a high level technical committee to go deep into the reasons for the flood. In addition to serving notice to the respondent, the Court had also appointed an Amicuscurie on its own to assist the Court during the argument. FRNV is vigorously pursuing this PIL before the Court.*

Dear Readers,

FRNV invites stories from its readers on deep-rooted values that have helped us in our everyday lives. Some of these stories will be featured in the next issue of our newsletter. So put your thinking caps on, recall the values integral to your life which you cherish and write to us at shilpi@valuefoundation.in.