

Dr. MCR Human Resource Development Institute of AP.
88th Foundation Course for
All India & Central Civil Services.
Inaugural, 03-09-2013.

Key Note Address
by Dr. Prasanta Mahapatra, Director General.

The Chief Guest & Honourable Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Sri. N. Kiran Kumar Reddy; Sri Chandravadan, JDG and the Course Coordinator, Dr. Vijayashree, Additional Course Coordinator, Faculties of this Institute, Counsellors, Invitees and my dear Officers. I welcome you all to this grand campus and the Foundation Course under the auspices of the Lal Bahadur Shastray National Academy of Administration. I hope that your stay here is comfortable.

At this juncture, of excitement & anticipation, it would be desirable to review & recognise the rationale of the civil services as enshrined in part-14 of our constitution. Particularly articles 309 to 312 specify a rule based framework for public service. Articles 315 to 323 mandate the public service commissions for recruitment into civil services on the basis of examinations accessible to the general population.

A convenient starting point for any discourse on the role and relevance of civil services is Max Weber. Weber's characterisation of bureaucracy highlights technical efficiency¹. I would like to highlight, in addition, the political expediency of the civil services for a great country like India.

History of the imperial examination system in China is very instructive, in this regard. Emperors in China were faced with the challenge of retaining control over all regions and localities. Nobles and notables, once appointed as prefects, nurtured their own ambitions of sovereignty, and tended to secede. Non hereditary officers recruited through an imperial examination system was a response to this challenge. In 124 BC, the Han emperor Wudi established an imperial university for training and testing of officials in the techniques of confucian government. The system was streamlined by the Sui dynasty reigning from 581 to 618 AD. They introduced the rule that officials of a prefecture must be appointees of the central government rather than local aristocrats. Compare this with the concept of All India Services!

The Tang dynasty, that ruled from 618 to 907 AD, introduced jinshi examinations which tested a candidate's knowledge of the Confucian classics.

¹ This is achieved through stable, rule based official jurisdictions and staffed by people recruited on the basis of their qualification for the job.



This system gradually became the dominant system of recruitment into the bureaucracy. By the end of Tang dynasty, the old aristocracy had been destroyed, and its power was taken by the scholar-officer, who staffed the bureaucracy. Under the Ming dynasty, reigning from 1368 - 1644, the Chinese civil service system was further revamped. Elaborate precautions were taken to prevent cheating in exams. Districtwise quotas were given to prevent regional dominance. Posting in home district was not allowed. Officers were transferred every three years. The system was continued by the Qing dynasty, which ruled from 1644 to 1911.

Note that the imperial examination based nonhereditary officialdom was a response to a political challenge. The challenge of governing a big country such as China and holding it together.

The East India Company picked up the Chinese idea of recruiting administrators through an examination system. In 1806, a Company College was established in London, to train administrators. Her Majesty's Civil Service in UK, developed after the Northcote-Trevelyan Report in 1854. The centralised examination system recommended by this report resembled the Imperial examination system in China.

Recall that most monarchies and princely states in pre-independent India, recruited their officers from among scholar bureaucrat families and communities. Inheritance and patronage played a major role in these appointments. Recall also that most of our freedom fighters suffered at the hands of the civil servants, then working for the British Raj. However, the framers of our constitution unhesitatingly chose a permanent civil service and population based recruitment of civil servants, by an independent commission using a transparent set of merit criteria. This has been a significant achievement of our body politic.

As I ponder over our role in nation building, the political idea of the rule of law comes to mind. The rule of law in its most basic form, is the principle that all persons in a country, irrespective of their political or economic status, are subject to laws of the land. The idea of the rule of law is ancient. For example, Aristotle said more than two millennia ago that 'the rule of law is better than that of any individual'. The idea and culture of the rule of law gained ground in England and struck its roots under the Norman rule, starting in 1066. Albert Dicey narrates Tocqueville's observation that conducive cultural values of English society contributed in many ways towards the rule of law. Albert Venn Dicey, Professor of English Law at Oxford, in his book on constitutional law, first published in 1885, dealt with rule or supremacy of the law, and popularised the concept in modern times. Building on Tocqueville and Dicey, I



believe the civil service in India has an important responsibility to cultivate the rule of law.

We can go on about various other contributions of a permanent civil service towards nation building and a just society. The key take home message for us is that the civil service is in an unique and special position to build a better India. But caveats and conditions apply! Formalised rule based governance can easily degenerate into red tapes. When rules and procedures serve no useful organisational, social, economic or political function, bureaucracy becomes a burden. A bureaucracy has also the dubious distinction of enormous capacity to thwart people's aspirations, shackle an entire society to processes and procedures, sap peoples energies and rob people of happiness.

I am reminded of Franz Kafka's novel 'The Trial'. The original German title of 'Der Process', I think, translates better and more appropriate for our purpose, as "Due Process". It tells the story of Josef K. a man arrested and prosecuted by some authority. Neither the prosecutors, nor the judge, much less the accused, know the crime for which the guy is prosecuted. Eventually the Trial ends in gruesome death of the man.

Yet another problem with bureaucracy is the resistance to democratic control. Legitimate control of the various public services by the political executive is fundamental to our democratic polity. On the other hand, iron triangles of stable cooperative relationships between politicians, bureaucrats and supportive interest groups can subvert public welfare.

In summary, the institution of civil service is politically expedient and has the capacity to sustain rule of law. On the other hand, it is vulnerable to anomie, red tape, and/or misdirection turning it into a burden on the people. Each one of us as civil servant can make a difference. Our professionalism, conduct and character adds up to make bureaucracy viable and worth while for our countrymen. I hope, with help of my colleagues at this Institute, the panel of counsellors, and distinguished guest faculties, we will be able work with you towards a sound foundation.

Effective and enlightened stewardship of the civil service by the political executive is very important. We have a lot to learn from the politician's perspective, on the role of civil service. Today, we are all fortunate to have amidst us, a sagacious statesman with an impeccable track record. It is my honour and proud privilege to invite Sri N. Kiran Kumar Reddy, Honourable Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh and Chairman of the Governing Council of this Institute, to deliver the inaugural address. Jai Hind!

