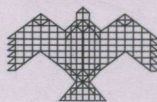


Excellence in
Leadership
Lecture Series

Excellence in public **Administration**

Yogendra Narain

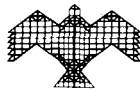


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Indian Institute of Science Campus, Bangalore - 560 012, India

Excellence in Public Administration

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Excellence in Public Administration*

Yogendra Narain

I am very grateful to Dr. Kasturirangan and the NIAS for inviting me to Bangalore to speak on Excellence in Leadership. Bangalore itself is a leader in a specialised field, the field of Information Technology. If I was permitted to make a parody of the famous lines of Shakespeare, that ‘some are born great, some achieve greatness and some have greatness thrust upon them’, I would characterize Bangalore as a city which when established was not consciously born to lead; it did not have leadership thrust upon itself and yet it achieved leadership because of the dedication, hard work and inspirational leadership of the people it attracted. This is what excellence is about.

I intend to speak today on Excellence in Leadership in the area of Public Administration. By public administration, I am basically referring to governance and conceptually, governance in a democracy implies

*Dr. Yogendra Narain had given a Lecture on “Excellence in Public Administration in India” on 24 January 2007 during the 21st NIAS Course for Senior Executives on *Excellence in Leadership*.

governance by the three State organs, i.e., the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. My belief is that excellence in governance is basically the sum total of excellence in all these three bodies which individually and collectively symbolise the State.

In our country the concept of good governance has been accorded prime importance since early days of civilization. The ideal of common good *sarvajana hitaya*, *sarvajana sukhaya cha* formed the crux of the administrative functioning in India. Ancient Indian philosophy and treaties laid emphasis on *Raj Dharm* which included within its ambit the code of conduct and duties of the ruler towards his subjects as well as the conduct and duties of the subjects towards their ruler. The sovereign was in fact known as '*Lok Palak*'. Manu, the ancient law giver of India directed the ruler of the State to look after the people as his children. Kautilya in his magnum opus *Arthashastra* surpasses the western thought on the subject and can even be considered more modern than post-Wilsonian Public Administration. Max Weber's concept of rational authority exemplified by a depersonalized bureaucracy is, in fact, similar to that of Kautilya and was propounded way back in the Fourth Century B.C. Kautilya felt that to ensure good governance there must be a properly guided public administration, where the ruler should surrender his likes and dislikes in the interest of his subjects,

and the personnel running the Government should be responsive and responsible. He was like the 'Constitutional slave'. He further emphasized that for citizen friendly good governance there should be uniformity in the administrative practices as well as competent ministers and officials possessing qualities of leadership, accountability, intellect, energy, good moral conduct and physical fitness, capable of taking prompt decision without allowing things to drift. These values and qualities considered sine qua non for excellence in leadership formed the core of the concept of excellence in public administration.

The concept of good governance was vociferously reiterated by our leaders and founding fathers during our freedom struggle and after attaining Independence. Mahatma Gandhi attributed the dignity of human beings, self-restraint, dignity of labour and value based egalitarian society to the high ideals of good governance. After independence, when our Constitution came into force these ideals got reflected in that and gradually they formed integral part of several statutes and legislations. We can say that the concept of good governance is the foundation on which an edifice of effective public administration rests.

Examples of achievements of excellence in leadership in public life abound in numerous examples throughout

our country's history and even today. The leadership provided by Mahatma Gandhi in the freedom movement and in the symbolic Civil Disobedience; his organizing the Dandi March in the face of a hostile colonial power; the raw leadership displayed by a young Major of the Indian Army who dies fighting the militants but yet leads on his men till his last breath; the economic leadership displayed by our Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh in opening up the economy in 1999; the leadership displayed by our Hon'ble President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in pioneering the evolution of indigenous missile technology; the leadership displayed by Dr. Swaminathan in leading the Green Revolution and making India free from problems of food; the leadership displayed by Dr. Kurien in leading the White Revolution and making India the topmost producer of milk in the world; the leadership displayed by the institution which helped to establish the milk net – an information based project of the NDDP which will bring transparency in the collection/transportation and processing of milk and ensuring timely payment; these and many more unwritten stories and unknown stories of leadership forming part of folk lore in the villages, towns and cities of India are worth studying. It is for us to dissect lives of these known and not so known leaders and identify the qualities of leadership which could be absorbed by us individually in the different areas where we are working. But what about the future?

The 21st Century India, with an annual growth rate of 8 per cent must have an efficient public administration with high standards of honesty and integrity, enabled professionally, to meet the needs of an emerging economic power. To achieve the developmental goals of poverty eradication; to ensure education for all and provision of health care facilities for its over billion plus population; for improving infrastructure including road connectivity, electricity, drinking water supply and sanitation; the public services of India have to be more dynamic, efficient and emotively committed to their special responsibilities. Public administration has to be viewed in our country as an essential infrastructure and one of the main pillars of our functioning democracy.

The executive leadership, both political and administrative, has to set the right tone and create a conducive environment for growth. Even though we have cruised over from the historical Hindu growth of rate 4 per cent per annum to more than double of that rate, yet our public services enjoy very low public esteem and confidence because of their many faults and shortcomings. They are also quoted sometimes as barriers to growth. It is aptly said that there are too many public servants for too little public service.

The concept of public administration revolves around human beings and, therefore, excellence in public

administration should be achieved by making the human factor its central concern. The people, not the administrators, are the centre of things according to Shri Jawaharlal Nehru. Emphasizing this aspect he had said, "Administration like most things is, in the final analysis, a human problem – to deal with human beings, not with some statistical data...The administrator may think in abstract of the people he deals with, come to conclusions which are justifiable apparently, but which miss the human element. After all whatever department you deal with, it is ultimately a problem of human beings, and the moment we are driven away from reality... Administration is meant to achieve something, and not to exist in some kind of an ivory tower, following certain rules of procedure and Narcissus-like, looking on itself with complete satisfaction. The test after all is the human beings and their welfare."

While we cannot ignore the contribution of the public servants in making India strong enough to be the only surviving democracy in South Asia, it must be accepted that it is a combined political, bureaucratic and private sector initiative that has brought us to this position. However, the public perception of public administration in India and public services is negative on the balance. This is largely because of the fact that a free, frank and fearless Media constantly brings to the fore the weaknesses and deficiencies in our administrative apparatus and largely

moulds public opinion. We are proud of our free Media and our excellence in public administration would lie not in suppressing it but endeavouring to remove the deficiencies and endeavouring to achieve a more perfect environment in the delivery of public services.

Public administration is largely dependent on the civil services that man the governmental and the public sector. But it is supervised in the implementation of its tasks by the political non-permanent leadership both at the Centre and the States as well as the Panchayati Raj institutions. All these agencies have to work with a sense of service and a mechanism should be put in place to hold them accountable to the people.

The approach paper to the 11th Five Year Plan highlights the fact that “far too many people still lack access to basic services such as, health, education, clean drinking water and sanitation facilities without which they cannot be empowered to claim their share in the benefits of growth”. It also mentions that more than 30 per cent of India’s billion plus population are still illiterate and nearly the same number live below the poverty line. Excellence in public administration will lie in evolving new policies, strategies and mechanisms to minimise if not eliminate these weaknesses. Excellence in public administration will lie in preventing the harassment of the common man and having a citizen centric system for public service.

The goals of public administration have been shifting since we got our independence. Immediate post partition period required the civil services to prove their excellence in the task of rehabilitating millions of penniless refugees who migrated to India from Pakistan; it proved its excellence in the speedy merger of the 500 plus Princely States into the Indian Union; it proved its excellence yet again in making India self-sufficient in its food grains requirements and eliminating the constant threats of famine and starvation deaths by evolving strategies for raising food grains production from 50 million tonnes in 1951 to over 200 million tonnes within about two decades; it proved its excellence in devising policies which could double India's rate of growth, attract foreign investment both direct and institutional, and in increasing our foreign exchange kitty to more than 170 billion dollars; it proved its excellence in implementing the post 1991 economic reforms which enabled the country to enjoy the benefits of globalization and liberalization; it proved its excellence in a uniform and rapid economic growth of the country.

However, the negative aspects of this growth should also be ascribed to the failure of public administration which consists of both the political executive, i.e., the Minister as well as the administrative executive, consisting of the civil services. The first and foremost area of weakness is in the rule of law. The strengthening of the rule of law is

basic to improving service delivery and promoting governance. The criminal justice is under strain. The latest available figures show that while there are 40,000 cases pending in the Supreme Court, more than 39 lakh cases are pending in the High Courts and more than 250 lakh cases pending in the subordinate courts. The rate of successful prosecutions has also gone down from 61 per cent two decades back to 48 per cent at present. The position in the civil cases is even worse. The civil cases go on from generation to generation without being decided. Police is not looked upon as friend but one, which should be avoided to the extent one can. Lodging of an FIR is very difficult and the general impression is that unless the palms are greased, cases are not filed.

Another area of weaknesses is corruption in the public services. According to Transparency International Corruption Perception Index, India in a list of 159 nations ranked 88th in order of the most corrupt nations on a scale of 1 to 10 and has marginally improved its position to 77th last year. Though, we are slightly better than China but this is no consolation. It has been pointed out in the study that if corruption can be minimized then there would be an automatic growth in the GDP by more than 1.2 per cent. Corruption in India is fuelled by intricate and not so open bureaucratic procedures, which become a maze to be manouvred only by the most adept.

The next area of weakness in public administration is not creating enough employment opportunities for the ever-growing workforce.

New schemes have been devised like the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme but the fact remains that only 8 per cent of the work force is in the organised sector. Even in the organised sector, more than 70 per cent are in government employment. The remaining 92 per cent in the unorganised sector are bereft of all welfare schemes and protection. While it is true that the contribution of services as a component of the GDP is growing and now contributes about 53 per cent to the gross domestic product but sufficient employment is not being generated for the educated. The U.P. Government and certain other governments have come out with unsustainable schemes like allowances for unemployed graduates but this is creating non-productive income, which will adversely affect the economy.

Another area where public administration has yet to prove itself is the growing incidence of poverty. Almost 30 per cent of the people in India live on less than one dollar a day and 70 per cent of the people in India live in less than two dollars a day. A major cause of poverty is ill health and health care expenses. In a study carried out by Anirudh Krishna, a social scientist, it was found that in 59 per cent

of households in communities covered in Rajasthan, 74 per cent in Andhra Pradesh and 88 per cent in Gujarat, health and health care expenses constituted a primary reason for their descent into poverty. Maternal mortality rates remains 300 deaths per 100,000 live births. There is no effective and affordable public health care system and people are forced to seek unavoidable high cost treatment. This leads to more deaths and more ill health.

Another factor, which has contributed to a decline in public administration, is growth of feelings of caste and community. These two factors have started playing an increasing role in matters of public employment, grant of quota and licenses, etc. This has led to an increasing burden on the courts by persons aggrieved. If the quality of administration and public services could be rectified, there would be less burden on the courts and less delays in the disposal of cases.

The public servants of the country have to show today the excellence and commitment displayed by their predecessors of the early years when their predecessors brought in the Green Revolution and the White Revolution. The Government machinery has to interact with the ordinary citizen in a more positive, friendly and cooperative manner.

Another factor, which has caused a decline in public administration, is interference by the political executives in the day-to-day working of the administrative executives. This has led to the best man not being put in the best position leading to a further decline in standards of public administration. Politics in India has got progressively dominated by groups of unscrupulous manipulators at the State and Centre levels. The close nexus between some politicians and hardcore criminals has become common knowledge. Elections are fought and won with money and muscle power. Members of civil service have forgotten the rich tradition of public service reputed for its high level of integrity, objectivity and professionalism. They have also began to support the unscrupulous politicians in power to get choice postings and faster promotions.

Excellence in public service has to be a conscious effort by public servants as a class to really raise themselves to levels of excellence. This can only happen when the political masters also appreciate and understand the role of a non-political civil service. They must also realise that their need for money to successfully fight elections of the Parliament and State Assemblies has made India a very weak State in terms of quality of governance. Need for huge funds for election campaign encourages corruption. No political executive using ill-gotten money to come to power can govern. To satisfy their supporters, who have given them

money to fight elections, the political executive will have to enunciate public policies to satisfy them. They will also have to acquiesce in the transfers of civil servants, who are not pliable, leading to further weakening of administration. No political party in India is free of nepotism.

Good government is not possible without continuity and intelligent government without local knowledge. A Collector/District Magistrate on an average has a tenure of about a year. In such a short period, he cannot deliver results and execution of schemes or implementation of the Five Year Plans. It discourages them to put in the requisite hard work of inspecting field programmes, or leading their team of junior officials for effective implementation of socio-economic development schemes. The Government, for the above reasons, has proposed the enactment of a new Civil Service Act to give statutory tenure of a few years to a civil servant in any official posting. It will prevent cases like that of an IAS officer who in Bihar in the year 2004 got on three successive dates, three posting orders as Collector and DM of three different districts. Under the new Civil Service Act, transfer of officials before their statutory tenures would be done in the public interest only on the recommendation of the Establishment Board in the State comprising of senior officials and presided over by the Chief Secretary. If the advice of the Establishment Board is disregarded by the Chief Minister, the matter would be reviewed by a three member

Ombudsman who would be empowered to send a report to the Governor of the State or the President of India in this regard. There is also a provision in the Bill to set up an Ombudsman for review of premature transfers of officers with fixed terms in posts under the Central Government. This will give the civil servants a feeling of much greater security in discharging their legitimate duties.

To further enforce excellence in public service, it is necessary that annual performance targets of officers be drawn up by the Reporting and Reviewing Officers of the official concerned. This would be on lines of the 1993 Act passed by the US Congress called the Government Performance and Results Act to enforce accountability for performance of federal officials. This Act made it mandatory for the officials to have annual performance targets and those who fail to perform, are weeded out. Another essential step to be taken for achieving excellence in public administration is to separate policy functions of the Government from service delivery function. This has already been done in UK where between 1986-96 as many as 136 executive agencies were set up as discrete management units with adequate management financial resources and manpower to give quality service to the people. At present about 60 per cent of the British civil service are in the executive agencies. The concept of performance pay has also been introduced in these

executive agencies. There is no interference by the government in day-to-day functioning of these agencies.

To ensure excellence in public administration, it is also necessary to make institutional arrangements for recognition of excellence in work. At present in India, good work done by officers goes mostly unrecognized unless the officer himself leaks out his good work to the Media.

Another step that has been taken to reduce corruption is the enactment of the Right to Information Act, 2005 under which anyone can seek information from Government departments through the statutory appointed information officers in each Ministry/Department. The Act, having made all public decisions open to public scrutiny, is one of the greatest bulwarks against corruption and the arbitrary exercise of power. The right of the citizen to access any public document, except those excluded under section 8 of the Act, is the most appropriate step to strengthen democratic foundation of our government and make our public services much more fair, transparent and objective.

Yet another factor, which can contribute to excellence in public administration, pertains to the promotions of e-governance in a large number of areas including income-tax, insurance, banking, central excise, municipalities, registration, land records, procurement, police, etc. It

has been proposed that a huge network of kiosks for operationalizing e-governance will be established – one in every six village. It is also proposed that Government approvals will be obtained electronically. E-governance will reduce the need for direct interface between the citizens and the bureaucracy and hasten the decision-making and introduce automaticity to the fullest extent possible.

Yet another connected area in this regard is the use of new technology in administration. Some of the initiatives taken in this regard are computerization of land records and acceptance of these computers printouts as legally valid documents. Once the system is used throughout the country, amendments and their incorporation can be done simultaneously by electronic linkages between the Sub-Registrar and those of the revenue officials. Similarly, in registration, the thumb impression would be replaced by biometric finger printing. Stamp papers would be dispensed with by payment of equivalent amount in a bank with an endorsement that the stamp duty has been paid. Railway reservations have already exemplified the beneficial use of technology in booking tickets from home. Similarly, in telecom, the revolution in cellular telephone has done away with the huge backlog of requests for telephone connections. The tele density is rising rapidly to more than 17% and this has been made possible due to the increased

private investment allowed in this sector. In income-tax, the Pan Cards and Pan numbers have been issued which will be helpful in tracing out the income-tax payers.

Yet another method of moving towards excellence in public administration is the appropriate training of officials. Richard Marcinko, one of the important corporate thinkers had rightly stated that 'the more thou sweatest in training, the less thou bleedest in combat'. Training of senior officials annually by international institutions should be adopted if we have to succeed in a globalized world. In an economy where the challenges are global and the competition is international, where the money flows, in those areas, where there is least corruption, it is necessary for our administrators at all levels to be trained by the best minds in the world and adopt the motto of think global but act local. Government has already tied up with Harvard and Duke University as well as the IIM's to train senior functionaries of the Government.

Excellence in public service can be possible if public administration attracts persons with talent and competence. For this, it is necessary to pay the public servants adequate compensation. People are going for private sector jobs because of the very high monetary compensation offered. The total emoluments of top officials of the Government of India like the Cabinet Secretary or

the Chief of the Staff of the Defence Forces does not amount to more than 60 thousand per month in which income-tax has to be paid in the prevailing rates. This does not match with the emoluments of the top executives in the private sector. Even the graduates coming from the Indian Institute of Technology and the Indian Institute of Management, when they initially join the private sector as management trainees get about Rs.8 to Rs.12 lakhs on an average per year at the beginning of their career. The disparity in emoluments between government and the private sector is certainly too glaring and calls for immediate action.

Another strategy for achieving excellence in public service is innovation. Eric Hoffer has rightly said that it is the innovator, who in the period of drastic change, will inherit the future and those who do not do so will find themselves solving only the problems of a world that no longer exists.

The public servants in India must remember the Homeric ethics 'always be the best and keep ahead of the rest'. Though the Press does not highlight many incidents of innovations but from time to time stories of individual civil servants who have withdrawn from the beaten track and devised new strategies in implementation do keep appearing in the Press. Recently in the Times of India, dated January 3, 2007, there was the mention of a young and

articulate District Collector Manju Rajpal who turned the National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme into a mission of faith. She carried out several innovations like motivating tribals to register for the scheme, publicizing it through public meetings and promotional cassettes; ensuring that every member of the government machinery is committed to NREG by camping personally in 60 gram panchayats. She saw that each of the 2.46 lakh workers registered under the project in Dungapur holds a job card. She adopted local innovative techniques, for example, on the eve of the first day of registration for the employment guarantee scheme, those displaying a lack of interest were sent yellow rice, a traditional form of information that makes the attendance mandatory. A whopping 1.82 lakhs workers registered on the first day itself. A committed public servant can make all the big difference.

To encourage excellence in public administration, we also need a properly formulated and executed incentive plan. Incentives can be both in the monetary form as well as in the form of public recognition. The government must honour those civil servants who have exhibited outstanding abilities and showed commitment to the allotted task. There are too less Padmashrees and Padma Vibhushans for those serving in the public sector. In countries like UK, senior and honest civil servants find mention annually in the Queen's honours list, but not so in India. The District

Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police of Siwan in Bihar, who had the courage to extern a famous don-turned-Member of Parliament must be honoured and recognized. The MP was externed for six months which was unheard of in Bihar till then. The Member of Parliament was informed that there were 8 cases of murder and 20 cases of attempted murder pending against him and 'his presence in Siwan can seriously jeopardize the law and order situation'. The farsightedness of the DM and the Superintendent of Police erased fears from the minds of the people and the Member of Parliament was finally arrested.

Yet another step towards achieving excellence would be the introduction of citizen report cards. It is the citizens who must perceive and feel whether the services rendered to them are excellent or not. The introduction of such citizen report cards in every sector of administration would provide a valuable tool to the organization leaders to reform and reorientate service delivery. For this, of course, it is necessary for the citizen to effectively participate. Good governance can come only from an empowered citizenry. The people must help the government to reform itself and should feel part of the decision-making progress. The vigilant citizen can shake up the bureaucracy by making it duty conscious and accountable. Therefore, the citizens must act either on their own or with the help of the NGOs.

Unless the public servants are made fearless, they shall never improve. Therefore, what is required is a blend of reforming the public service and empowering the clients, i.e., the citizen. The people must possess the right tools, information and opportunities. Only an empowered community can build the relationship that extends the capability and reach of public services, achieve high standards of excellence, initiate innovative services and augment operation efficiency. The following words of Mahatma Gandhi have to be instilled in the public servant by slightly modifying the word “customer” wherever it is used to a “citizen” as follows:-

‘A customer (citizen) is a most important visitor in our premises. He is not dependant on us; we are dependant on him. He is not an interruption in our work; he is the purpose of it; he is not an outsider to our business; he is part of it. We are not doing him a favour by serving him; he is doing a favour by giving us an opportunity to do so’.

In governance, there is leadership at every level and in every hierarchical unit through which policy is translated to work. While the political executive takes the lead in formulating policies and the civil services take the leadership in implementing them, but as the implementation proceeds from the State Government to the District, the District Magistrate to the construction/implementing agency on

the field, from the agencies to the actual contractor who is going to execute the work, and from the contractor to the sub-contractor, who has tendered to execute the work on the spot, there is leadership at all these levels. Excellence in leadership in its totality would be a combination of excellence in leadership at all levels. For example, if there is excellence in leadership at the political level and also at the topmost level of the implementing agency yet if at the lowest level, the agency which is actually doing the work on the spot, and coming in contact with the land and the citizen, tends to indulge in shoddy implementation then excellence in leadership, however, praiseworthy, is replaced by criticism. We could thus say that excellence in leadership lies in the excellence of each unit in the total chain and the strength of the leadership would be judged by the weakest leadership displayed at any level. Therefore, excellence in leadership in large organisations, like the Government, does not depend on one person or one individual. That is why it is necessary to instill motivation to do your best in each and every level of public administration.

Furthermore, the nature of leadership varies at each level. At the highest level in public administration, i.e., the political leadership, excellence would lie in formulating policies which can transform society and the nation and lead it to the achievement of the mandate given by the people. If the mandate, for instance, is to eradicate poverty

and to improve the lot of the weaker sections of the society, then excellence would lie in identifying and initiating those policies which could do so effectively. Similarly, at the implementation stage while the objective is clear, excellence in leadership would lie in implementing the political decision efficiently within time at the least cost and by methods acceptable to the people. To illustrate, we can take the example of the setting up of the special economic zones. If we visualize purely from the motive of promoting industrial growth and increasing employment, one would call it an excellent policy. However, if in the implementation for achieving this objective if we have to forcibly take over the lands of the farmers or if in setting up of this special economic zones, we take the most highly productive agricultural areas, we would not certainly think it as excellent policy and, therefore, the whole policy chain, starting from the formulation of the policy, would lose its acceptance and be characterized as a policy in which the leadership has failed. Therefore, in public administration as well as in large organisations, excellence in leadership is not at a single point; it is a composite strength of leadership displayed at the various levels.

It must be accepted that the institutions of public governance are the repository of public power and public power, which in turn, is based on the trust and faith of the

people. Therefore, public purpose requires, public interest needs, and public good demands, that exercise of public power must be subject to the benefit of the society as a whole.

It is interesting to note that till very recently there were very few laws, which had provision to fix the accountability of public service providers to the citizens. However, recently Acts like the National Human Rights Commission Act, the Right to Information Act, the Fiscal Management and Responsibility Act and the presentation of the outcome versus outlays budget has added a strong measure of accountability to the public services. Furthermore, the Consumer Protection Act has included service of any kind, including but not limited to the provisions of facilities in connection with banking, financing, insurance, transport, processing, supply of electrical or other energy, board or lodging or both, housing construction, entertainment, amusement under it. As we can all see a number of services mentioned above, would cover institutions under the Government like banking, insurance, public transport, electricity boards, housing boards, etc. This Act can be utilized by the citizens whenever there is a deficiency in service by the service providers. The apex court has also included the supply of gas or any service given by any statutory authority within the purview of the Consumer Protection Act. The apex court has also

emphasized that the State is liable to compensate for loss or injury suffered by a citizen due to arbitrary action of its employee. Thus, public authorities, acting in violation of constitution or statutory provisions or Press are accountable for their behaviour.

Accountability is one way of inducting excellence in public administration. Accountability, inter alia, is the soul of good governance and the absence of it is a sign of bad governance.

The judiciary also provides its services and is a very much apart if the framework of the State providing public services to its citizens. No doubt, the concept of independence of the judiciary is one of the basic concepts of our Constitution. But here also, the State is endeavouring to ensure accountability by bringing in the Judicial Accountability Act. To expedite the disposal of pending cases which, as I stated earlier, amounting to about 40,000 in the Supreme Court, about 40 lakhs in the High Courts and about 2.5 crores in the subordinate courts by brining in fast track courts and Lok Adalats. The latest information technology techniques have also been utilized in the working of the courts. Furthermore, the courts in their judgements have shown sagacity and maintained the harmony between the different organs of the State.

And what about the functioning of the legislature? Our legislators are very much criticized in the Media and degraded in the public because of the walkouts and the frequent disturbances both at the State level and the Central level. How do they achieve their excellence? To analyse their functioning, it is first of all necessary to understand their 'Dharma' that is their essential nature. Legislatures are essentially meant to deliberate on important issues affecting the nation as well as legislate on the Bills presented to them by the executive. Are they performing these functions in ample measure? Are they achieving excellence in their demarcated area?

For this, it is necessary to analyse the facts and figures. As Secretary-General of the Rajya Sabha, I analysed the functioning of the Upper House of Parliament in the last four years consisting of 13 sessions. A very different picture emerged, then what is projected. For example, in these last 13 sessions spread over in 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006, the time lost in disturbances or walkouts amounted to 249 hours and 3 minutes. However, the extra time in which the Upper House sat to deliberate and passed Bills amounted to 240 hours and 40 minutes. This shows that the legislators also realise their 'Dharma' and their essential functions and if they do indulge in disturbances, they also make up by working extra hours. It must also be understood that when legislators indulge in walkouts or create disturbances, it is

primarily to send a political message to the country as well as to the executive that they are not happy with the policies being followed. On the positive side, it must also be seen that the legislators have functioned by and large satisfactorily in that they have passed their budgets in time after intensive discussions. More than 124 Bills were passed in this period, the number of questions asked were more than 25845 and Members raised 1149 Special Mentions highlighting the issues of the constituencies and of the country in general during this period. Substantial work, by all counts, is done in the legislatures, though the working is often marred by violent or non-violent disturbances.

Here also I must point out that it is due to the basic principles of governance, which the politicians have followed, that a political party, when it wins the elections, automatically come to power without any resistance from the out going government. The out going government, which loses elections, automatically goes and resigns before the President. This may seem very ordinary. But in other countries especially in the failed States, this does not happen automatically and the out going governments tend to cling the power. This again shows the excellence we have achieved in our policies of governance. The maintenance of the democratic traditions, the power wielded by the opposition in our Parliament and State legislatures, the influence of the deliberations in the legislature on the

executive are all proofs of the vibrancy and excellence in the legislative sector of governance.

It is observed that excellence is sustainable when it is backed by moral and religious base. I had been reading the Bhagwad Geeta for years and I find many characteristics and many virtues of a good leader given in the message which Krishna gives to Arjun. When Lord Krishna says in Chapter 2, stanza 47

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते संगोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

Thy right is to work only, but never to its fruits; let not the fruit of action, *be thy motive, nor let thy* attachment be to inaction. This to me is the secret art of living and inspires life. Almost all of us refuse to undertake great activities, being afraid of failures and even those who dare to undertake noble endeavours, invariably become nervous ere they finish them due to their inward dissipation. We must work with the best that is in us, dedicated only to the noble cause of the work undertaken; this is the secret prescription for the noblest creative inspiration. This is the eternal law of activity, which always ends in a brilliant success. The lesson is that if success you seek, then never strive with a mind dissipated with the anxiety and fears for the fruits.

Then again in stanza 48 of chapter 2, the Bhagwad Geeta says as follows:-

योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि संगं त्यक्त्वा धनंजय ।
सिद्धयसिद्धयोः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥

Here Arjun is advised that abandoning attachment, be balanced in success and failure and maintain evenness of mind. Let us take an Artist. When he is at work, he forgets himself in the ecstasy of his work. In all inspired activities, the worker forgets himself in the work that he is doing. When he thus forgets himself in the work, he will not care about the success and failure of his activity. Because to worry for the results is to worry about the future and to live in the future is not to live in the present. Inspiration is the joyous content of thrilled ecstasy of each immediate moment.

Then again in stanza 13 of chapter 12, Lord Krishna says –

अद्वेषा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च ।
निर्ममो निरहंकारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी ॥

This means that he who hates no creature, who is friendly and compassionate to all, who is free from attachment and egoism, balanced in pleasure and pain and

forgiving, is a perfect person. Then again in stanza 18 and 19 of chapter 12 of the Geeta reads –

समः शत्रौ च मित्रे च तथा मानापमानयोः ।
शीतोष्णसुखदुःखेषु समः संगविवर्जितः ॥
तुल्यनिन्दास्तुतिर्मौनी सन्तुष्टो येन केनचित् ।
अनिकेतः स्थिरमतिर्भक्तिमान्मे प्रियो नरः ॥

In this the message that has been stated is that a good devotee is one who is the same to foe and friend and treats honour and dishonour all the same, who is the same in cold and heat and pleasure in pain; who is free from attachment; to whom censure and praise are equal, who is silent, content with anything, steady minded and full of devotion. In my opinion, these are the essential traits of a good leader. This is more in public leadership because public leadership implies impartiality, equal treatment to all and being free from any individual attachments which can affect one's judgement.

The Bhagwad Geeta also gives us the concept of 'Dharma'. Dharma here does not imply religion. It implies your essential nature. Each of us, in whatever position we are in life, has to find our Dharma. I am of the firm opinion that in governance, we have to confirm to our essential nature, which would then determine our essential duties. For example, if I am a legislator, my Dharma is to ensure only that legislation is passed which is good for the people.

My Dharma as a legislator would also be to ensure that deliberations are carried out in the legislature on matters which affect the general public and which can do good to the citizen. Similarly, if I am a Judge, my Dharma is to ensure that I give judgements impartially without fear or favour. My Dharma would be as a Judge to ensure that I can give relief to the oppressed in a speedy and expeditious manner so that those who are in the right side of the law strengthen their faith in the judicial system. If I am in the civil services as a public servant, my Dharma is to ensure implementation of tasks in such a way as to promote a healthy respect towards governance, the fear of law, and to ensure equitable benefits to all. Even though democracy is a political concept, yet it is necessary to realise and accept that except the legislators who have to be political, the executive and the judiciary has to remain a political. Problems start when there is politicalisation of the executive and the judiciary. Excellence in public governance will lie in ensuring that there is no mixing of these three sub-castes if I may say so. If I may use the words of the outgoing Chief Justice of India, there should be no 'cozying' amongst any of these three organs of the State.

It is appropriate that we are dwelling on the theme Excellence in Leadership when the country is celebrating the centenary of the first Satyagraha started by Mahatma Gandhi on 9/11,1906. The success of the Satyagraha and

the success of our struggle for independence were largely due to his exemplary leadership. He emerged as a leader not by wielding power and authority but by controlling his passion, scrutinizing action and above all serving people. It was the example of a leader who put precepts to practice and led by showing examples. It was through the rigorous application of self management, self assessment and self control he attained excellence as a leader and inspired the common and exploited people to perform extraordinary deeds. The spirit of service and sacrifice became the defining theme of his leadership qualities. His excellence as the leader of the dispossessed people was displayed when he faced the most trying and challenging circumstances.

Over 3 quarters of a century ago, Gandhi ji listed 7 sins of public life. They were politics without principles, wealth without work, pleasure without conscience, knowledge without character, commerce without morality, science without humanity and worship without sacrifice. These principles are as valid today as when first enunciated, especially in the area of public administration.

The quality of an outstanding leader is to transform harsh conditions to opportunity. Gandhi did so by seeing truth in the suffering of the Indians in South Africa. He strove to mitigate that suffering and realize truth which he described as God. What he did in India after he came from

South Africa was nothing but an extension of his first Satyagraha. By affirming that he could fight the might of the British Empire on the strength of the dumb millions he was testifying to his ability to identify himself with the toiling millions and depend on them for launching mass movements. He was an ordinary mortal with all the weaknesses of a normal human being. By cultivating positive traits and overcoming negative impulses he could transform himself as an undisputed leader of the people. The advent of independence for our country and the transfer of power to the hands of Indians did not divert his attention from the principal objective of his life-service to the suffering humanity. Even as Jawaharlal Nehru was hoisting the national flag in the ramparts of the Red Fort Mahatma Gandhi was in Noakhali attending to the victims of communal violence and bloodshed. The then nominated Member of Rajya Sabha late Prithivi Raj Kapoor glowingly referred to that example of Gandhiji serving the distressed people in Noakhali and stated on the floor of the House that independent India required such leadership qualities in every walk of life.

Any leader imbued with the ideas of service and dedicated to emancipate the humanity from suffering and bondage is a great leader. The excellence of a leader in fact springs from the ability to serve selflessly. No wonder that Albert Einstein had said that “it is higher destiny to serve

than to rule”. It may sound to idealistic. But leaders driven by idealism contend themselves by extending services to the needy and the lost.

While dealing with the definition of leadership and identifying examples of leaders who are counted as the very best in the world it is important to study the model of leadership developed by the Software Engineering Institute of Carnegie Mellon University in 1995. It outlined four types of leadership levels from type 1 to 5. While leaders belonging to Level 1 to 4 focused attention on organizational matters, performance parameters of the enterprise, formation of teams, etc. the level 5 leader concentrated on the more important aspects of motivating the workers through team work and giving them inspiring leadership. It is fascinating to note the explanation given by the University concerning Level 5 leadership. It observed, “Level 5 leaders are a study in polarity in both modest and determined, humble yet bold...Their primary driver is the larger cause of an enduring organization (read nation) rather than personal myopic gain.” It concluded by saying “This is Gandhi to many of us.”

Excellence in leadership could thus be attained by putting into practice the ideals of service. It also means that a leader while leading from the front would combine privilege with accountability. Being part of the team he or

she would consider himself or herself as a motivator setting an example of doing the work to the best of his or her abilities. While being competent the leader must also be compassionate. Leading by example he or she should have the ability to see the leadership qualities in others and fostering those qualities among them. In other words what we require is the Level 5 leadership which was best exemplified by Mahatma Gandhi and which needs to be replicated in many areas of nation building for achieving excellence in results and affirming values and standards of ethics. These are not merely textbook maxims but are practical and achievable objectives.

Gandhiji's statement that "Each of us must be the change we wish to see in the world" constituted a fervent appeal to each person to lead. In twenty first century one of the recent issues of the Time magazine was devoted to the theme You. It recognized that the caliber and talent of the ordinary persons translated into action in a variety of ways contribute to the success of the leaders. Ordinary people are the repository of remarkable abilities. If these are harnessed by building our human resources then a silent revolution would take place. In fact excellence in leadership means excellence in tapping the huge human resources that we have for transforming India to a vibrant modern country pulsating with the values of tolerance, social justice, equality and fraternity.



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Books Published: ABC of Public Relations for Civil Servants; Book of Poems - 'Clouds and other poems'; has written several articles on topical issues and public administration; edited several parliamentary publications.

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Source: <http://rajyasabha.gov.in/whoswho/sgynarain.htm>

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Dr. M. S. Swaminathan is the Chairman of the Council of Management of Institute. Dr. Raja Ramanna was the Director since its inception till his retirement on July 31, 1997. Prof. R. Narasimha was the Director from 1997 to March 2004. Dr. K. Kasturirangan, (Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha), Former Chairman, ISRO, is currently the Director of the Institute.