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It gives me great pleasure to come to the Annual General Body Meeting of the Indian Institute of Public Administration as its President. In fact, this is the first occasion when I am addressing this Meeting as the President of the Institute, I am fully aware that the task of developing the discipline of Public Administration, the task of making this discipline respond to the complex and multifaceted challenges facing our vast and ancient developing country, the task of training administrators at various levels according to the needs and dictates of our ever-changing and complex problems and the task of building bridges among people, administrators and political executives are indeed stupendous task. However difficult the task and however impressive our achievements over the last 34 years, it is always the case that we have many more miles to go and many more difficult challenges to meet.

In this task the Indian Institute of Public Administration has made its modest but markedly distinct contribution, I, as a President

of the Institute, derive a pleasure of satisfaction from the fact that the Institute has carved out for itself a unique place on the academic and administrative maps of India.

This is not to say that we can rest on our oars. The daunting problems facing our country in the field of administration, in our tryst with development, in our incessant attempts to alleviate poverty and give our people all the opportunities for realising their full potential as citizens of a great country with a still greater future are continuing tasks. Despite impressive advances made over the last decades, I am sure, you would all agree with me that much still remains to be done both qualitatively and quantitatively. In some spheres, we have to speed up the pace of development, while in the others we have to even change our direction and redefine our tasks. In some spheres, we have to complete what we have initiated, in others we have to implement what we have legislated; while in a few other areas we have to make a beginning.

An annual gathering like the present one of the practitioners and theorists of Public Administration is particularly an occasion for us all to reflect on our endeavours, our policies and accomplishments. We have to bridge the gap between our goals and our achievements, our capabilities and the actual state of affairs. It is only through intense and objective introspection, by a ruthless exercise of subjecting ourselves to an open and frank assessment that we can hope to learn from our past.

At this stage, when we are in the midst of various exercises directed towards the formulation of the Eighth Five Year Plan and when we are drawing our lessons from the mid-term appraisal of the Seventh Plan, it is quite natural that we direct our attention to the new challenges and tasks facing development administration. It is time that we do a certain revamping of our development strategy, particularly, in view of the fact that our agriculture remains exposed to the vagaries of monsoon. We are faced with the challenges of meeting recurring droughts, floods and extending the scope and intensity of green revolution to newer crops and regions of the country. It is only if we succeed in combining the pursuit of stable increase in agricultural output with measures to ensure a regular flow of purchasing power into the hands of the

small and marginal farmers and millions of landless that we can alleviate hunger and malnutrition. It is only then that we can avoid the embarrassment of having mountains of foodgrains in our godowns along with the spectacle of a large number of people going to bed on half-fill stomach. This requires new thrusts in development administration, particularly, at the level of districts. Planning from above cannot by itself meet these challenges. Therefore, decentralised, grassroot planning has to be adopted in a big and effective way in order to make plans realistic, implementable, effective in terms of agro-climatic zones and responding to our complex socio-economic realities.

The grassroot planning has been talked of for a long time. I remember, Pandit Nehru used to talk about it. And we also talk to a certain extent about it. But it looks, it just did not happen. I do not know who is at fault—our planners and theorists or those who are implementing—but there is no escape from it. We have to face it and see that grassroot planning takes place.

It is only befitting that decentralised planning at the level of districts and blocks is receiving the attention which is its due, and much of it did not receive for a long time because, if I am not mistaken, it is about 30 years back that we submitted our report on democratic decentralisation known as the Balwantrai Mehta Committee Report. It is also very appropriate that the institutions of democratic decentralisation are sought to be revitalised, if need be by means of constitutional support. I would only wish to add that it takes a lot of detailed and painstaking thinking to translate good slogans into effective action. It is for institutes like ours to lend its hand to the task of suggesting ways and means of making district planning an effective means for people's participation, for responsive development administration and for meeting the aspirations of the people.

Planning and bureaucratic methods do not go together, as the experience all over the world suggests. This is more particular the case in our country where, as the architect of the country's new administration Pandit Nehru, realised that our administration still remains overweighed by its colonial legacy. I think, his remarks are true even today. The task of ensuring a genuine, democratic,

effective and responsive administration brooks no delay. Such an administration, consistent with our ethos, values and complexities, is yet to emerge. To this task I would implore you all to devote your intellectual energies.

By the way, I may tell you, I heard two months back about our administrators being sent to Harvard for training. Harvard is an excellent institution. I have nothing but praise for it. But a remark that was made by one of our Members of Parliament struck my mind. He said, after 40 years of Independence we are still overburdened by the our earlier thinking, thinking something British or American being superior is still there. Is it not possible or has it not been possible for India to produce people who can condition them? And the Member said that it can be understood if they go there for a short period to see what they are doing? Anyway, I have mentioned it before you as a challenge to all of us. I may also say, it may be considered as a reflection on our performance. I personally have no doubt in my mind that if all of you decide, we can remedy the situation. Just a few days back, I was told that an institution was recognised as the institution of national importance. I was talking to M.V. Mathur just now and he suggested that this should be done in the case of this institution also. I do not know what we were doing before. But we must deserve it anyway. I do not say, wilfully we deserve it because I do not believe in patting one's own back. Now I am a part of you.

How to ensure that the most marginalised and poor citizens of the country, say the villager or in Gandhiji's words, the *Daridra Narayan*, can have a sense of purposive partnership with an administration which is unresponsive, and lethargic, more interested in overawing him with its power and pomp than in identifying itself with his urges and need? One of the remarks of the Member of Parliament was also this that the conditions of the two countries coincide and what may be true or what may fit in the conditions of the United States of America or even Britain may not fit in and is not likely to fit in with the conditions prevailing in my own country. These are the remarks where I find that there is something to ponder about. I just mentioned it to you. My opinion is not there.

How to ensure that our bias for elitism does not give rise to paternalistic attitudes and highbrow administrative practices? If the poor villager and the floating urbanite have to realise the potential promised in our Constitution, of living in a society in which justice, social, economic and political shall inform every walk of our life, it is imperative that a thoroughly overhauled and re-designed administration, both physically and culturally, comes into existence. The advances in science and technology, including social sciences, make it possible for us to ensure a future which is in keeping with the lofty ideals and great values upheld by the leaders of our national movement. The task is to apply these advances in science and technology and make our social and administrative system capable of making these applications possible whether it be the question of security for the man in the street or the question of world peace and disarmament. It is in the sphere of our socio-economic and political institutions and our capacity to manage our affairs that we find an explanation for the great chasm between the reality and the potential. It is for a comprehensive and inter-disciplinary area like public administration to address itself to these tasks, both at the macro and the micro levels. I am sure, over the years, we have developed enough manpower and intellectual resources in our country to be able to address ourselves to these tasks. The need is to make bold and go ahead to develop a new kind of commitment which gives us an appropriate sense of priorities and corresponding values and work ethics.

I am sure given these vital elements, we would be able to reach the goals we have set for ourselves. It is to these tasks that an institute like the Indian Institute of Public Administration has to address itself during the remaining years of the 20th Century. It is to the extent that we are successful in accomplishing these tasks that we will enter the 21st Century of our conception which accords with our concerns and values which have been sanctified by those who fought for our Independence, and which does us proud as a nation.