

12. Item 10 of the Agenda : President's Address

Addressing the General Body, the President, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru said :

First of all, allow me to congratulate you on this new phase of your existence in this new Hall. It is very spacious and it is not only good for you but good for Delhi which hungers after Halls all the time. You cannot get them.

Now, this meeting of yours is more or less an official Annual Meeting. Nevertheless, in the remarks made by the Chairman and by Prof. Karve—I am only rather a showpiece in the Institute—and by your publications, I gather something of the work that is being done here.

I have a feeling that while, no doubt, people may make

suggestions for improvement and additions and all that, basically this Institute is performing an important function. After all, administration, and more especially public administration, is always important, but it is doubly important in the India of today. The administrative apparatus is growing. It is important because of the new types of activities which have to be undertaken. It is important that some kind of a rein should be put on the administration not to grow too much. There is always a tendency to grow. It has become so, as you very well know from all this talk about Parkinson's laws, etc. There is a great deal of truth in them. It is amazing how administration grows. I think it does require constant check. But, after all, in a modern State, and in every State, but in a modern State especially, the administration—the question of its efficiency and the way it does its work, its quality—is of extreme importance; and, therefore, Prof. Karve laid stress on quality. There is no point at all if you had thousands of people attached to this Institute but there was no quality in them. Even a relatively small number of people of quality can set a tone and I think the main object of this Institute is to raise standards in administration and set tones. My impression is that it is doing that. They may do it better still, but anyhow it is doing that to some extent. I do think it is important, and it is important not only in the sense of the normal administrative work that has to be done, but in the fact that in India we are spreading out in social domains. Administration spreads out to public enterprises in a big way and raises entirely new problems—new aspects of the old problem, whichever way you like to put it. That applies even to private enterprise, but private enterprise deals with it in its own way.

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Here in public enterprises, we come up against a certain inevitable inertia of the governmental apparatus. The inertia of any large undertaking tends to make it rather static. An inertia at this stage in India is obviously very bad. Therefore, in seeking what might be called, if I may say so, perfection in administrative routines, we often miss, or may miss, the object that we are aiming at.

Take the Government of India, which has, I do not know how many, manuals of procedure, which some very highly talented people may understand, but most people do not. What

are those manuals of procedure meant for? Apparently, I may use the word, perfection in administration. Ah! there must not be a mistake here, check, counter-check, references and all that. This is all well-intentioned but if that results in the thing not being done or a great delay occurring in doing it, then the main thing is gone, in spite of the perfection aimed at. Now that is a great difficulty which any public concern has to face. That is, curiously enough, the average administrator, not the special one, goes by precedent. He has to. Precedent has to be there and wherever precedent is the dominating factor, conditions are looked upon as static. Therefore, movement is slow and responsibility is spread out over anonymous individuals. That I think is a very important aspect for everyone of you, who is connected with administration, to consider, *i.e.*, what your objective is. Is your objective the writing of a book or a fine manual of procedure, as to how things should be done, with as near an approach to perfection as possible? Or whether your objective is to get the thing done, no doubt correctly, otherwise there will be trouble?

What is the objective? For instance, even in the Planning Commission's reports, it was said so much money had been spent on this or that. It was an indication, no doubt. But a far better thing would be what has been done and not how much money has been spent, as the money may not have been well spent, may have been wasted. Here, some ridiculous examples come to mind. I am not referring to the Planning Commission but to State Government reports which say that there has been so much money spent on roads. Actually, some of the roads may not have been built at all. But this is a silly example. It is not the usual thing. But the point is a shifting of our attention to things done, not so much to what we have spent upon them, not so much even, although it is important, to the manner of doing them, but to the thing done. That is the real basis, the basis of performance.

I believe that in industry more and more wages, or whatever is paid, become tied up with what is done. How much a person works, he gets paid according to that, which is a very good approach. It is a fair approach to all concerned. It is not a particularly easy matter to have this kind of test for an administrator. You cannot measure his work easily. Nevertheless, I think an effort should be made to measure to some

extent, to know his performance in different things. Or, at any rate, the objective to be kept before us should always be what is done, not what is written about. Then again, if you have an objective, it is not merely a question of the particular thing you do, although that is important, but the broad objectives that the administration pursues. Everything else has to be fitted into them.

What are our broad objectives? The broadest of all, you may say, is, I believe, the socialistic structure of society in India. In order to attain that we have to go over innumerable difficulties and all that. It is true, and we have all the time to compromise with those difficulties, because we do not write on a clean slate. Human society is a very complicated thing. But it does become important that that objective is always kept in view and governs our thinking and our activity. We may have to temper our activity or tone it down because of some circumstance beyond our control. That is a different matter but the objective has to be kept in view so that we are going in its direction. We may go fast and occasionally we may go a little slow.

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No administrator, I suppose, or anyone else for the matter of that, can really do first class work without a sense of function, without some measure of a crusading spirit : 'I am doing this, I have to achieve this, as a part of a great movement in a big cause'. That gives a sense of function, not the sense of the individual, narrow approach of doing a job in an office for a salary or wage, something connected with your life's outlook or anything, perhaps being interested, as people inevitably are, in one's personal preferment in that particular work. I do not say it is a bad thing to be interested. One is always interested in oneself and cannot get rid of it. Nevertheless, the main thing should be this sense of function in one's job, and how we fit in that for the larger objectives you place before yourself : whether you are a public servant or a professor in a university, whatever it is, if you have got that, then you get a certain special halo around you, if I may use the word, which takes you out of the common rut and your work also gets an element of distinction because of that. So we must, therefore, aim at this : having a clearly defined objective in a well-run machine, anything, an administration or a factory, or something else. By their own impetus they go

on and on. They go on because the machine is working and good administration gets that kind of impetus. But apart from that, where you are tackling new problems and the administration is growing, that old impetus is not quite enough. It is helpful, very helpful. But you have to supply a new drive all the time and that drive only comes from a clearer understanding of objectives and some measure of associating it with your function, if I may use the word again.

Now, in India, we are facing, constantly as you see, quite extraordinary difficulties: difficulties normally outside the scope of the administrator's work. We may have trouble over the language issue; trouble in Assam, Bengal, Punjab or elsewhere. We may have trouble over something else, which really comes in the way of the normal work one has to do in the country, coming in the way of administration and everything. It is unfortunate because they divert attention from the real work. The real work in India, in spite of all this about which we see headlines in the newspapers, the real work fundamentally is this: the implementation of the five year plans. Planning is a comprehensive scheme with a set of objectives and the ways pointing to those objectives, and broadly speaking, it may be said, that it has been accepted in India. Criticism may be directed to some parts of it, some emphasis here and there. Something should be done here, something else should not be done. That is a different matter. But the broad approach to planning, as in the past plans, and also in the third plan, is, I believe, very widely accepted, and not only accepted in India—and this is rather a new phenomenon, if I may point it out—it is accepted outside India by people who are not necessarily partial to us at all, who are objective critics: who may even be sometimes slightly unfriendly critics of our policies, but who try to look upon it objectively; and this is, as I said, a fairly new development, because these people have come here from other countries, looking at it, as experts. I am not talking about tourists, but men who have come to examine this, men who in their own countries follow different policies, and they have come to the conclusion that, broadly speaking, this is the only approach in India. It is rather an interesting aspect of this, because our approach has been not only conditioned by the objectives we seek to attain, but conditioned also by the objective conditions that surround us. It is not a doctrinaire approach,

putting down all the things we like to happen. Therefore, the objectives are fairly clear. Although they are clear, I do not myself know whether that fact is adequately recognised by the average man or woman, and it should be our function to make everybody realise that these are our objectives and to make everyone measure any problem that arises from the yardstick of these objectives. That I think is rather important.

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When we talk about public administration we think mostly of the higher ranks of the public administration, which is inevitable. They set the tone. But, I think I mentioned it last year too, how important it is to think of administration at the lower levels, in terms of persons there, because there is, I believe, a big gap between the quality of the higher levels of administration in India and the lower levels. There should not be that gap, and we should try to improve the lower levels too, and make them feel that they are not some kind of people outside the ranks of the elect. This is, of course, unfortunately due largely to two things in India : our own fault largely, and the fault of the British.

Whatever we may say, we are so caste-ridden, and not caste-ridden in terms of caste only, but in terms of other things : group-ridden consciously and very often unconsciously, so that it is difficult to get out of it. The British introduced in the Services this caste feeling—the superior services, the inferior services, the I.C.S. and all that; and nothing could have been a more rigorous, narrow-minded, though may be efficient, caste than the old Indian Civil Service—with steel walls surrounding it—, and the others were kept down. That is a bad inheritance which we have got. It is going, of course. It is far less than it was. Nevertheless, this tendency of official caste, if I may say so, is there. It is a bad thing, not only in the sense of the machinery of government where one part of the machinery imagines that it is the most important part—a bigger piece of iron and steel—, and the other part is only a bolt. It is a wrong idea. The whole thing has to be considered as a whole. An individual person, who thinks himself as an individual and not as a part of a link in the whole machine, does not get the correct perspective.

What is more important is, whether you are in the higher ranks of the administration or the lower ranks, you have to deal

more and more with the mass of hundreds of millions of the Indian people. That is of vital importance and the problems that you have to face cannot be resolved, by and large, by official orders from your officers. They have to be resolved by those hundreds of millions, and you have, therefore, to develop the capacity to move with those millions, get them to move and move yourself.

In any State, ultimately in any democratic State, if it is properly developed, or in any public welfare State, you have to remove the barriers between the administration and the so-called administered. The ultimate way to remove them is to make the administered themselves administrators. I want you to think of it. Large sections of people should become administrators in some form or other, in some sphere or other. Whether they are administrators in the village or in the higher spheres, whether they are Panchas in the Panchayat, they are administrators in a particular field. And this association of ever larger numbers of people with the administration of the country—the breaking down of the barriers between the administrators and the administered, and at the same time giving everybody a sense of working for common causes—is a good thing, good from many points of view. I think that one of the biggest changes that has been taking place in the past year has been this conception which is often referred to in most unmusical words as “democratic decentralisation”. I wonder why we cannot find some other word. Of course, in Hindi we call it Panchayati Raj, which sounds much better. I have no doubt about that. It is spreading administration to hundreds of thousands of persons in the villages. That is administration. So don't you imagine that an administrator is only the person who has got a degree from a university and who has a post somewhere, or best of all, he has had a special course here in your School? The Panch is an administrator. Every member of the Panchayat is an administrator in a particular sphere, and he should be recognised and respected as such.

Apart from the theory of what I am saying, practical conditions are going to compel you and me, and all of us, politicians and others, to do that in the future, because, I think, the basis of our politics is going to be powerfully affected by the spread of what is called Panchayati Raj. The people are becoming conscious of its implications. The Panchayats, the Panchas, are not

silent spectators. They are not the people running up to the Deputy Commissioner or the District Magistrate to say "Do this, do that for us". They have to do it themselves. They have got the responsibility. It makes all the difference. They may make a mess of it here and there. Higher people in higher grades of life also often make messes of life. They have to face that. That is the only way and I think it is a tremendous thing. Therefore, I should like you to keep in view that your administration is something with which millions of people in India are associated and they should have a sense of being associated in doing things in every village. It is highly important.

Then about the human approach in administration. Inevitably, administration—of course parts of it, especially in secretariats and the like—is apt to become cut off from the human side. It is not cut off if you are a District Magistrate; you have to deal with the human side all the time. But if you are sitting in offices in the secretariats, you are apt to be cut off. Again that is bad at any time. But in a dynamic and moving society where you have to move and move along with masses of people, it is very important to have the human approach. I do not know how any school can teach you the human approach; it is something outside the element of school teaching. But, nevertheless, it is important to draw attention to it because the most competent of administrators may be a flop if he has not got that human approach today. I have seen it happen in some departments at work, and I have seen that repeatedly: very good administrators just cannot get on because they have not that human touch. That becomes important.

Finally, this business of telling people that you have to do this or that is not enough. You have to do it, of course. We had, this morning, a conference dealing with, what is called, public co-operation. That is, bringing the public into our major schemes and all that. I asked the question: "public co-operation with whom?". Is it the idea behind that appeal for public co-operation that the administrators are the centre of things and the public should co-operate with them? That is a wrong idea or approach. We may be in important positions. We may be able to tell the people what to do. That is another matter. But to tell the people to come and co-operate with the administrators is not the right approach. The correct approach

is that the people are the centre of things and we are going to help them, this is a psychological approach; but not that we are the centre, we the administrators; that we the Government, we the Ministers, are the centre of things and out of the goodness of our hearts we are doing good to the public. "Let them cooperate with us"—that is not the approach at all which goes down with anybody. Therefore, it is a psychological thing, the administrator's approach. It should be a humble approach and it should always treat the person—whoever he may be, the peasant, the villager, the worker—on terms of friendly equality, never as a boss. This kind of thing has gone now. It does not pay. More than that, and I tell you, in cases where you have to deal, let us say, with some of our primitive tribes, the policy only that goes down with them is one to treat them as equals. The moment there is even a suspicion that you consider yourself their superior, your influence on them goes and if by any chance you show the slightest element of, what shall I say, contempt for their way of life, it is bitterly resented.

There is a very well-known instance. I think it was in the North-East Frontier Agency, or somewhere there. Long ago, I think it was in the late 19th century, a British officer went there with a platoon and all that and many people, and those 'frontier' people, came to receive him. They did not know who he was. Still they received him in a friendly way. This officer was foolish enough to make fun of some of their customs. He laughed rather slightly contemptuously. That night the officer and everybody who had gone with him were slaughtered just because of the insult the 'frontier' people felt—the feeling that "This man comes to interfere with us". This was, anyhow, an extreme example of a primitive people reacting. Therefore, there are strict injunctions today to any administrator who goes to such regions to treat their people always as equals, be respectful to them and to their customs, never to show that you are superior to them. That may be so there. But it really applies in your dealings with anybody, of any class, grade or degree. If I may say so, and I say so with some hesitation before teachers and professors, it applies even to children. Treat them as equals, your own child, and you will find a better response. Of course, the bond between children is an intimate bond of affection. But, nevertheless, this business of being superior and inferior,

this approach, should go. Some people are superior in mind, of course, or in body, or in many things. It is a fact. Therefore, they are given greater responsibilities. But from the human point of view and from the point of view of getting things done by others, there should be no exhibition of superiority in the human approach.

In the India of today, the administrative system should be, and to some extent is, of course especially in the Central Services, a unifying agency. It is very important because there are so many destructive tendencies. Our army is a tremendous unifying agency. Our men in arms come from all over India; they work together, they get to know each other and they function in different parts of the country. The administrative services—all of them to some extent—, and more so the all-India administrative services, have to play their function of helping in this unifying process, which is so important.

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13. The meeting was followed by an At Home.