



DYNAMIC ADMINISTRATION

Indian Institute of Public Administration (U.P. Regional Branch)

Editorial Board

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(A) Editorial

1. *Here we are again before our IIPA members and others, with this 114th issue of our quarterly newsletter "DYNAMIC ADMINISTRATION". It has been a fairly long journey since we started this periodic-ideas exchange and communications endeavour with our members and others long ago, -infact in 1988. For us this issue of 'Dynamic Administration' bears special significance as it deals with a much wider gamut of subjects than just of public administration.*
2. *This 114th issue of "Dynamic Administration" covers much broader issues of "Culture and Modernity". Cultures have long histories from their limited origins and expressions to their widening geographic horizons, from simpler ways of living and travelling to a much faster age of science and technology, of growing diversity, of varied political and social arrangements, of institutional proliferation across the globe and, importantly, of more geopolitical interactions which are mixtures of co-operation and conflicts. While endeavours through debates, conferences, international meets as well as high level academic interactions, are continuing these have yet to achieve full fruition. In economic and geo-strategic contexts many political, social and institutional arrangements have come into existence (namely, for example, the UNO, ILO, EU, SAARC, Shangai Club, Arab Coalation COAS, etc.), these entities have yet to gain the needed strength, force, unity, and influence and flower fully into political economic, geo-strategic social, cultural, and technological and institutional entities of co-operation, commons, purposes, effectiveness and strength. Largely speaking these are yet to emerge as effective and result-oriented institutional arrangements embedded in political, economic, social and geo-strategic power rootings.*
3. *Here we are mainly concerned with cultures in contexts of modernity. On the one hand what we come across in the cultural 'cauldron' is conventional wisdom and thinking of the past that have taught us the value of inherited spiritual and social beliefs*

and ways of thinking and living. On the other there is so much coping demanded by frantic changes of pace and the cascades of technological innovations and fast paced economic and scientific developments. The contending forces of tradition and modernity are at work in the world and we need solutions, workable solution where cultures can thrive co-operatively and respond to modernity by promoting social, economic, academic and scientific co-operation and

coalescence. Cultural and modernity are not opposites but potentially interacting and complementing entities. It is our choice to make both work as reinforcing entities.

4. It is these and related issues that are proposed to be discussed shortly in a forthcoming high level Workshop that is planned to be organized by IIPA (U.P.) and its sister organization SHERPA. This 114th issue of our quarterly newsletter *Dynamic Administration* is devoted to the theme.

(B) CULTURE AND MODERNITY

CULTURE:- What is culture? What are its meanings, its origins, its diversities, its pluralities and its contending and conflicting (even clashing) forms? When we look back, cultures appear to be characterized by nostalgia, by remembrance, by a question-informed delving and, often, by partisan pride tinged with prejudices that get stimulated by diverse types and goals of geography, history and religion. When we see cultures in their plural, dispersed forms which are, many a time, juxtaposed in confrontatory modes, they seem to be difficult of reconciliation. Differentiations of thought, ideological multiplicities, varied social and cultural milieus, different religious beliefs and practices as also geopolitical factors are some of the elements that define these diversities. And, when we shift to future, the prospect seems both uncertain and challenging. This challenges needs to be squarely met.

Culture, as a word, has many definitions. According to Dr. S Radhakrishnan, the distinguished philosopher and second President of India, the purpose of culture, "is to educate, to entertain and to elevate the spirit of man." Andre

Malraux said, "it is the sum of all forms of art, of love and of thought". This is, broadly speaking, the classical definition which points to the conclusion that culture makes life worth living. It is strongly connected to religious and moral foundations of life as lived in different times and different climes. Some feel this definition is elitist for, in history, social conditions, more often than not, and similar other factors, limit access of people to education, entertainment and enlightenment.

History has its own rhythms, its uncertainties, its contingent nature, its unpredictability. Many theories of history have been developed over time, highly different and widely differing. The debate continues and will continue in future, too, for that is the very 'raison d'etre' of history. Each culture has its own potentials and possibilities of self-expression which arise, ripen and decay, and may arise in yet another fresh flowering. Human beings have acquired this capability to destroy human life on the earth many times over. Affluence and poverty stalk each other in fear and hope. The so-called balance of power has lost the sobering touch of

multiplicity and dispersal. There is distrust, intolerance, fear, despondency and increasing incidence of violence that is spreading to many geographies, many cultures and many civilizations. We are told by some theorists that civilizations are clashing. Dishonesty and corruption have acquired premium in governments, in politics, in bureaucracies, in the corporate world, in arts and sciences, in sports, in commerce and in most other walks of life. Diplomacy is said to be on the retreat. The metaphors of inter-community, inter-regional and inter-country discourses are informed by suspicion, unwillingness to accommodate, coarseness, threats, exclusion and braggadocio. World over, trends of temptation-based and overtly or covertly forced homogenization can be witnessed. Power dominates the world arena—the power of military strength and armaments, of technology, of media with instant coverage and wide viewer bases, of advertisements, of mobilization of skills material resources and of wealth. Power has largely shunned the company of higher cultural, ethical and spiritual values. It stands raw and naked in its menace, its impatience, its degradation, its indifference, its inequity. It needs to be tempered and led to paths of co-operation, unity, peace and progress for all.

Multiculturalism:- Multiculturalism in the world is now a fact of life. It is far more so in India of continental dimensions where nearly all religions and diverse, ideologies are to be found, where we have rich provincial and national literatures and varied art forms, where scores of languages and dialects are spoken, where the ancient and the modern coalesce or quarrel and contend and where the past and the future live in difficult, contesting and uneasy simultaneities. Decades

ago, Tagore (1921) felt that there was need in the country to establish 'harmony between the physical and spiritual nature of man, maintaining of balance between the foundation and the superstructure'. He said he also believed in the true meeting of the East and the West. (Modern Review, 21.5.1921) though he had premonitions, too. He said in the same breath (also in 1921), "I have seen the West; I covet not the unholy feast in which she reveals every moment, growing more and more bloated and red and dangerously delirious". It is remarkable that, in that very year, Gandhi ji also said that he was himself a great believer in free air. Writing in Young India (1.6.1921) he said, "I do not want my house to be walled on all sides and my windows to be stuffed.... I want cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible, but, I refuse to be blown off my feet".

Indian Culture in a Historical Perspective:- In a historical sense the Indian cultural panorama is colourful, diverse and deeply embedded in its varied philosophical and religious foundations, in varied social and economic structures and in its changing histories. It is a rich ensemble of cultures which reflects philosophic questioning, argumentativeness, accommodation, competition, conflict, creativity, imagination and also wit and humour. Since 'homo-sapiens man' has become man, religions have claimed a major share of his time, thought, striving, and even wealth. The functions of human beings have, in addition, had to claim, seed and flower creeds, beliefs, perceive truths and a sense of their superior nature. Religions and spiritual creeds and beliefs are expected to deepen and broaden the concerns for life and its purposes. This is true of our country in more senses than one. Here, spiritual cultures have, in broad and overall

terms, always emphasized the necessity of self-cleaning and of catharsis, and such catharsis implies eradication of violent and disruptive attitudes. That is essential for peace, benevolence, friendship and, hopefully, for salvation. India's span of physical, racial and religious variety is as immense as its linguistic diversity. It has been the birth place of four important religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, of which the first two are among the major religions of the world. From outside came to India Muslims, Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians and others amongst religious denominations, and Greeks, Kushans, Huns, Arabs and Mongols as ethnic groups. These intrusions, incursions and arrivals came in the form of invaders, colonizers, pilgrims, missionaries and traders. Anthropologically, therefore, the stock of the Indian population has multiple and mixed provenances—Dravidian, Aryan, Mongolian, Semitic and their mixtures and combinations.

Europeans reached India by sea towards the end of the fifteenth century as traders. By the later half of the sixteenth century they were received in Akbar's court. In the seventeenth century the French and the English established their coastal trading settlements. In the long strivings to assume ascendancy amongst the British, the French, the Dutch and the Portuguese, it was the British who finally emerged victorious in the competitive colonial drama. They ruled with a firm hand. They also nourished the communal canker to their own advantage. Caste and tribal identities were segregated and manipulated to weaken the nation. Ultimately, finding their hold on, and stay in, India far too over-reaching and impractical, they left rather in a hurry. India historically again

became an independent nation in 1947.

Post Independence India:- Independence brought the people of India to the stage of history where they had to shape and build their own future and their own destinies. Foreign domination was over. Now, nationalism alone, utilized so far as an instrument of political liberation, was not enough to take the country along on the path of progress. Such effort had to have social and economic content, a strong base of science and education, and policy framers, laws and institutional arrangements necessary to convert the new objectives into measurable results of economic and social progress and of changing aspirations into realities. The basic features of our Constitution, inter alia, include rule of law, rights and duties of the citizen, equality, due process, freedom of expression as also movement, secularism, independent judiciary, freedom of conscience and of free profession, practice and propagation of religions. India, it was agreed, had to be a secular state but that did not detract from, nor in anyway reduce, the relevance of cultures and religions to life. We do have a vibrant civil society with a dynamic voluntary sector comprising social, civil rights and consumer protection groups, NGOs, co-operatives, associational and institutional entities, women and youth organizations, environmental activists, think tanks, pressure groups and many other similar formations. This great diversity of social mobilization has widened and deepened over time but, generally, not in complementing and mutually reinforcing modes. So, we still see dissensions, opinion conflicts, emotionally charged contestations, exploding calm, display of violence, the politics of retribution and revenge, insecurity in public places and even in

homes, and discourses freighted with the burden of distrust, suspicions and scarred memories of wrongs suffered or imagined. A dynamic, participating civil society, with strong institutions and healthy democracy which practices openness, empowers people and enforces accountability, is so essential to economic progress in modes of equity and stability in the country.

As we stand now, in the first quarter of the 21st century, with many thousand years of history informed by a degree of continuity behind us and an impatient, pulsating 1.25 billion plus mass of people looking anxiously for a place in the sun, let us remember and recall that multiculturalism of India is based on diversity and pluralism in historical, social as well cultural domains and not on homogenization. Here, ancientness in its myriad evolving forms beckons us with the familiarity of our deep and differentiated roots and modernity hearkens us with its variety, change and speed and demands heed, attention and quick responses.

Let us tarry, observe the scene carefully and take a deliberate look all around us. What we see is often informed by contradiction and entropy. So, we have crass materialism and shallow spirituality rubbing shoulders. A generic urban situation can be easily imagined. A typical example would be relevant here. A young, urban, educated, middle class working and overambitious couple is striving to be upwardly mobile, socially and economically, in their respective firms, jobs and occupations. Each day, the pair faces the daily work grind. Add to it the evening commitments and night outs. Tuesdays, at the Hanuman Temple. Wednesdays, couching with favourite TV serials. Thursdays perhaps the Santoshima fast; Fridays

a late movie at the PVR, Saturdays, night partying, clubbing and pub or disco crawling. And then, sheer exhaustion is experienced on Sundays with perhaps a hang-over thrown in. The rural grind is even worse in the forms of poverty, lack of education ill health and malnutrition. All this huffing and puffing is accompanied by an atmosphere of insecurity and fear. Highways, streets, roads and even homes are informed by fear and insecurity. These are issues that demands good governance

Institutionally an important and strong offspring of modernity has been the nation state. The nation state system has both advantages as well as disadvantages. Let us examine how these contexts operate with different results. In a system where modernity stipulates the spread and exchanges of knowledge, free thought and scientific achievements, what generally gets promoted first are democracy, freedom, social and economic well-being and rule of law in the domestic and political arenas. At the same time some nation states mobilize power, resources, institutions and influence (including the threat or use of destructive force) for protecting their territory, sovereignty and national as also international interests. In other words modernity creates both opportunities and threats. In differing circumstances it valorizes either the secure or the sacral and, in the process, what gets created are, many a time, clashes, violence, post-modern disillusionment and diverse fragmentations. Enter globalization which has further complicated the picture. Globalization is not a new phenomena. In many ways it has existed for long in the forms of travel, trade, migrations, conquests, and colonizations. The journey of globalization is centuries old. But, its

reach, speed and scope were, earlier, limited. Globalization has now become a word with connotations of speed, fear, uncertainty, hegemony, homogenization, exploitation, loss of identity and that of sovereignty. Globalization is viewed in the South as a new phase of capitalism, a type of neo-colonialism. There are increasing apprehensions about the deligitimesition of the nation state and disjunctions between power, territory and even geography. This is admittedly the dark side of globalization. There is, however, very much a positive side, too. It opens up great many opportunities for poor and to developing nations for progress and grow. A good example to cite here would be that of China which has been a remarkable beneficiary of globalization and, while aggressively thumping on its global influence, it is also and protecting its domestic interests. India is following a similar path but more democratically, more openly and without any expansionary intentions.

Where do we then stand today in social, economic, moral, cultural and religious contexts? Admittedly India is a country of immense proportions in terms of area, population, cultural and religious diversity, multiplicity of literatures and art forms, a widening and deepening of the scientific and technological base, plenty of entrepreneurship, abundance of intellectual capital and a growing economy. We do face the problems of poverty, inequality, illiteracy, low levels of health, high child mortality, gender inequity and unemployment. We also experience a degree of political and social fragmentation and religious intolerance, of growing demographic pressures and unplanned urbanisation, of nuclearization of families and of atomization of the society. The

malignancy of communalism still subsists in the body politic of the country. To these may be added terrorism, violence, insurgencies, unfriendly neighborhoods, environmental degradation and the looming external challenges in economic, religious and security contexts. It is by no means a gratifying or an endearing narrative. The liberal spaces are becoming scare; so is social capital. These factors offer challenges and demand responses.

Conclusion:-

As we stand in the first quarter of the twenty first century there are many opportunities as well as many threats that we will encounter. The crucial issue is how to negotiate threats and avail of opportunities. The old debates of civilisational or cultural superiority and inferiority have become meaningless. Every civilization and every culture has strong and weak points. Now that the world has shrunk and pace of change has sharply and steeply accelerated, now that cultures are coalescing or even colliding with feverish speeds, differing stances with consequent possible impacts of great import, now that the world has acquired the capacity to blow itself off the earth many times over, and now that response times have got compressed and shortened to hours and days, there is, as never before, a great need to globally settle issues through dialogue, offer accommodation, display tolerance and look for cooperation, equitable arrangements and complementarities.

Over a century ago Swami Vivekanand looked at the problem in his inimitable but a still relevant way. In a speech delivered in New York in the last decade of the nineteenth century he, even at that point of time, talked about the two cultural or civilizational types—the Oriental type and the Occidental type, and went on to say,

"Each of these types has its grandeur, each has its glory. The present adjustment will be the harmonizing, the mingling of these two ideals". This just about roughly sums up the issue. The question is how to operationalise that mingling in meaningful ways. The future offers us opportunity. Opportunity is waiting. In words of Walter Mallone it keeps saying, "For everyday I

stand outside your door and bid you wake and rise to fight and win". Let us all, in humility but determinedly, resolve to win a victory for all. It is the only sensible choice that the world can make and that we in India, should also make. That is what, in overall terms, all Indian cultures and sub-cultures demand and the whole nation has to respond unitedly and resolutely.

(A) DOMAINS TO BE REFORMED

(A) (Political Domain) The first need is to set things rights in the political arena. Funding of political parties needs to be made open, transparent, informationally accessible to all citizens and subject to independent audit. Policies and programmes, in order to succeed, need political will, a degree of consensus amongst political parties on broad issues of development and public good and legislative as well as institutional framework to fully underpin such initiatives.

(B) (Policy Domain):-

(a) Public policy is what may be roughly termed as the projected programmes, goals, values and practices of governments. It deals with a very wide gamut of economic, social and governance related areas. Unfortunately, it has assumed adhocism as also discontinuity in the country. Policy planning is an ongoing process. It requires objectives and non-partisan high grade knowledge, experience, expertise, high competence and stakeholder involvement. To ensure that such resources become available, the need is for institutionalizing policy formulation on a continuous basis.

(C) (Administrative Domain):-

(a) Reducing the cost of governance. Introduce and implement administrative and police reforms in a time bound

manner. On a high priority basis widen the uses of ICTs and e-Governance,

- (b) Capacity building in government and its institutions and agencies and of PRIs & ULBs. Special attention to HRD and issuing of Citizen Charters for all Departments, public agencies and institutions,
- (c) Insulate government officials from recurrent political interference. Depoliticize administration, ensure tenure security. Reform police establishment,
- (d) Enforce effectively and openly citizen's Right to information law,
- (e) Strengthen anti-corruption law/machinery/institutions in preventive as well as curative modes. Deterrence needs to be built into anti-corruption measures and quick investigations and fast tracking of such cases in criminal courts has to be ensured. Openness in public administration is a prime need of good governance.
- (f) Introduction of quick and efficient grievance removal systems,
- (g) Introduce financial and budgetary discipline and fiscal responsibility at all levels,
- (h) Reform the Administration of Justice System,

- (i) Strengthen democratic decentralization and, importantly, bring about convergence in delivery systems,
- (j) Factor in environmental safety and sustainability and climate change response in all developmental processes. Good environmental governance, in order to succeed, demands that all stakeholders are taken on board in participative and inclusive modes. Growth without sustainability is a negativity that needs to be shunned.
- (k) Encourage voluntarism and take on board civil society collectivities and NGOs in partnership modes for various development and poverty alleviation programmes. Widen the scope of PPP arrangements in infrastructure building like roads, energy production, metros, urban development, etc. Improve the quality of education all levels.
- (l) Focus, markedly and at all levels, attention on Poverty Alleviation, Gender Equity and Empowerment and Entitlement Assurance Programmes,
- m) Ensure effective monitoring, evaluation and speedy corrective action for all projects and programmes. Clearly shift emphasis from expenditures to outcomes. For this purpose independent verification is essential.
- (D) (Economic Domain, including Infrastructure and Rural / Urban Development):-**
- (a) Step up very substantially investments on power, roads, irrigation communications and transportation. At the same time there must be high emphasis on strengthening of social infrastructure in areas like health, education, sanitation, drinking water, housing, nutrition and women and child welfare. Prioritise Safety Net Programmes,
- (b) Maintenance of Assets already created,
- (c) Tariffs need to be rationalized and depoliticized,
- (d) For pricing infrastructure related supplies and services independent regulatory bodies should be set up,
- (c) The legal, financial and managerial environment has to be made conducive to public-private partnerships in infrastructure projects & to private investment,
- (f) Special attention needs to be assigned to problems of Agriculture, Urban and Rural Development, Environmental Security, Natural Resource Conservation and Management and, much more importantly, HRD,
- (E) Employment and Manpower Planning :-**
- (a) Tackling the huge backlog of unemployment and providing income and employment opportunities to annual additions to labour force. While universal employment guarantee is distant goal, social security coverage and quality have to be improved.
- (b) The present labour laws need to be amended. It is self-employment that must be given high priority,
- (c) Skill formation and, especially skill upgradation to meet present and future market demands are most essential for meeting future manpower needs,
- (d) Development has to be made labour intensive in U.P. which is a highly populated state.