

Prof. N.S. Ramaswamy – A Great Visionary and Achiever

It was during those impressionable days of College life I had brief contact with Sri N.S. Ramaswamy, a few years senior to me in the Engineering College - Guindy - Madras. That was more than sixty years ago. As the General Secretary of the Engineering Students Association, he exhibited remarkable qualities of leadership, organizing ability, concern for fellow students and gave practical shape to many innovative ideas. Now for the last twenty five years I was closely associated with him in his pioneering work on Livestock and allied system, environment, ecology and the importance of ethics in every aspect of management and human relationship. His intellectual powers coupled with analytical ability and very effective communication skills always made deep impression on listeners and his speeches in various forums and places were extremely popular. In spite of all the accolades received by him he remained at heart a very frank, sincere, loving and friendly person always ready to help any one in distress or trouble. His personality is a rare combination of goodness, greatness, success and humility.

Looking back on his remarkable and long career it is very difficult for one to single out as to which was his greatest achievement. He was a Management GURU, Institution builder, a crusader for work animals and animal welfare, a reformer of administrative systems

T.N.K. Kurup*

and an ardent advocate of Indian Culture and Ethics for National Integration and probity in public life.

During the early days of his career in Bombay (Mumbai) his focus was in increasing productivity and work culture in the upcoming industries. He started looking into the larger section of public governance viz., Municipalities, Transport, Railways, etc in the company of Congress leader Sri Rajani Patel which caught the eye of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. He was entrusted with the onerous task of establishing the premier Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore. The selection of the site, the unique outlay and architecture of the entire campus, the greenery around and the initiative in making one of the most sought after Management Institutes of the country are entirely due to his conceptual, educational and managerial qualities.

It was during his tenure as Director IIM (B) that he studied the immense potential of animal transport in our country and the sizeable benefits which would accrue to the rural population if these traditional carts could be modernized taking into account the comfort level of the poor beasts of burden, lessening the neck load and draft effort resulting in

* The author is Secretary, CARTMAN, a Bangalore based NGO specialising in environmental activities. E-mail : cartman@vsnl.com

operational efficiency and carrying higher pay load for better financial returns to the farmers. The lean months of agricultural inactivity could be productively utilized in professional carting, if resorted to by the enterprising farmers. This was one of his solutions for rural productivity and betterment of livestock system. Modernization of meat industry by constructing rural based abattoir was another innovative idea thereby preventing transportation of animals over long distance in wretched conditions. He had spoken about these schemes in local, regional, national and international forums and his pioneering activities on animal welfare and modernization of Livestock systems are well known.

Studying deep into the Indian Heritage and Culture he was firmly of the view that the major cementing force for the unity of the Country is the underlying thread of Indian Culture as expressed in Indian Scriptures and literature, festivals, music, art forms and pilgrimages. To foster these he founded the Indian Heritage Academy at Bangalore and for the past three years published monthly journals for the cause of India Century Mission. This was a great success and there was genuine appreciation of this journal from various quarters,

During his interaction with different Ministries and Governmental departments he knew fully well that the present system of movement of files and administration would not produce any tangible result and, therefore, advocated a management system for better performance and accountability. He expressed that though the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) produced very committed and efficient officers, a systemic change is required for inclusive and effective

governance. He also wanted State and Central Government to restrict themselves to governance of the country only and leave the development activities to public and private corporations for better implementation and economy. The wide powers and finance vested in Government for development work have resulted in arbitrariness and favoritism which now eat into the credibility of Governments at Center and State. This finally brings us to the subject of ethics which at present is totally lacking in all levels of administration and public service.

It would be worthwhile to recall what Gandhiji wrote in January 24, 1922 much before we became independent.

“As we become independent all the defects of the system of elections, injustice, the tyranny of the richer classes as also the burden of running the administration are bound to come upon us. People would begin to feel that during those (British) days there was more justice, better administration, there was peace and honesty to a great extent among administrations compared to the days after Independence”. He added “But there is hope, if education spread throughout the Country. From that, people would develop their childhood qualities of pure conduct, God fearing, love. Swaraj will give us happiness only when we attain success in the task. Otherwise India will become the abode for grave injustice and tyranny of the ruler” (Courtesy Education World October 2012). How portend were his words as we see the ever declining standards of morality, ethics and probity in public life.

Professor N.S Ramaswamy spoke of character building and ethics from the student days to college students and later in professional life. In every talk he gave whether he addressed students, faculty,

Management Institutes, Public Corporations, Government administrators he advocated transparency, ethics, sincerity and honesty for the success of all endeavours. He quoted instances from Puranas and stories from ancient literature to bring home that these qualities were imbibed in our civilization and culture from ancient times.

His address to Rotarians in Colombo is of particular relevance. He spoke of service and what it does to the individual. If a person does a good deed without any idea of personal gain or credit in that act, the giver is benefited as much as the receiver. He (the giver) would evolve himself into a better human being. Prof. N.S. Ramawamy spoke of missionary and mercenary. In our country many of the rich and powerful and those who matter, mainly conduct their activities for enhancing their clout and improving their financial status. The country will not benefit and discontent will prevail. We have been speaking of electoral reforms for many years but nothing happened after more than sixty years. Prof N.S. Ramaswamy's recommendations on Electoral Reforms which he spelt out many decades ago and brought out recently in the Heritage-CARTMAN journal could be considered for implementation as the emphasis is on party and not on individual.

Many a time I felt that Professor N.S. Ramaswamy was much ahead of his times. He spoke of computer and their introduction in early 1970s. But this was not taken up due to objection from labour unions. He spoke of infrastructural development but nobody paid heed. Now every one talks of infrastructure. He spoke of electoral reforms many decades ago. It is in limbo even now. In every forum he took up the issue of modernization and part privatization of Railways. He also spoke on the relevance of

railway fare increase for giving better facilities and working of railways. Political consideration prevailed and now railways need major surgery for bettering their performance.

When young professionals sought advice from Prof. Ramaswamy he invariably told them the benefit of leveraging their activities for maximum gain (First order of lever). His own life was a practical demonstration of the same. The modern managerial techniques were found to be effective for manufacturing units for maximizing their productivity. If the same techniques are applied to Municipal Corporations, Public Utilities, Railways, etc., the overall gain and benefits will be incredible. Therefore his application of these methods in Government and semi-government agencies. In the Livestock sector the work and meat areas are the most neglected. If these are improved rural economy and animal welfare will have sizeable benefits.

The Government should concentrate in governance and if the execution of major schemes is left to the well managed private or public organizations, the country as a whole would benefit. The major impediment in the allotment and utilization of resources is lack of transparency, morality and ethics. Any amount of control, inquiries and T.V. shows will not completely eradicate this malady. The cure is within ourselves and it should start from the bottom to the top levels. Professional ethics, public morality, inclusive development should not remain in paper but should be practiced in every day life. Prof N.S. Ramaswamy by his talks, writings and actions did yeomen service for focusing attention on these essential and prime requirement for the progress of the Country. This I would consider is his great contribution which transcends all other considerations._____●