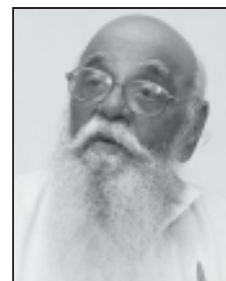


# Reforms In Professions



**Prof.N.S.Ramaswamy \***

## Preface

Prof.N.S.Ramaswamy was passionate about making India a great country and a leading light of the world. He was inspired by Swami Vivekananda's prophesy that this would happen in the twenty-first century. The motive for such an ardent wish was an ethical impulse. Large masses of Indians should be given a chance to lead better lives; better lives, not only in terms of economics, but also to rise to such a level as to fulfill human potential to the maximum.

In order to make this possible, he identified the stumbling blocks in our society and polity. He found solutions to each, which are practical and possible, provided there is a will. He publicized these tirelessly.

He conceived these solutions or reforms under the category of 'proper management.' The management function pervades every aspect of life at various levels. The wide ranging reforms suggested by him are given here, in this journal of ethical management - KMP

## The Medical Profession

The Government spends lakhs of rupees on the education and training of doctors; but benefits do not flow to the target beneficiaries commensurately. While many of our doctors migrate to foreign pastures, the majority of them who stay behind confine their work to the urban areas. There is evidence, however, that the doctors themselves have since taken the problem in hand and now endeavour jointly to migrate to rural areas, motivate the rural

population and generate conditions necessary for the responsive reception of health care services and benefits; but what is happening is not enough. An orientation is necessary to match the financial outlays.

The masses will, over a period of time, need comprehensive medical care and attention in times of sickness. They should be cared for in their own surroundings. The programme for the health care of adults is, however, depend hopelessly on other programmes for more extended fashion in

\* From the writings of late Prof.N.S.Ramaswamy, Founder Director, IIM(Bangalore), who spoke and wrote extensively on Professional Ethics in all areas of life. He was Patron of this journal and his first death anniversary was on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2013.

view of their importance according to this reckoning. It is in the interests of freedom that newspapers, journals, films, etc. function in the private sector of enterprise.

The printed word is somehow more credible. Children try to emulate the manners, trends and ideas they perceive on the screen. Mohabat and violence are said to interest most people – even the many educated in an audience. We see frivolous and spurious plots treated with disproportionate importance; but the more socially relevant information affecting the problems and living conditions of common people are never dwelt upon. The love-life of the bullock-cart driver makes good scenario, but not the obsolescent cart, the ill-treated bullock or the frugal and brutish lives of man or animal. The movie-makers generate illusions which are a far cry from the culture of the classes and the masses as well as from the freedoms that they really can give rise to. Such films corrupt the values and morals of the young and the impressionable. The social relevance of the mass media is, in conclusion, really quite low. Good writing and art draw nurture from common life for their tragedy, humour, pathos and for all entertainment in short. Will the situation improve unless mass media are freed from the overriding constraint of the private view and private profit? That the public view and public philosophy are lost sight of both in the matter of the choice of theme and the profit motive, only betokens a failure of sensibility.

### **Trade Unions**

There is a certain anomaly in discussing trade unions here under a separate heading.

Professional organizations, it was earlier argued, are close to social institutions, such as the guild, trade union or caste. For, this whole chapter is devoted to a discussion of certain professions which are close to the political processes. The power and influence certain professions wield in society and politics are undoubtedly due to the size and quality of their professional organizations. These constitute the sociological basis of their political power. They also owe their importance to economic factors, such as the importance to the economy of their service and physical product and to the resulting crucial relationship with the rest of society. This is the economic basis of their power. Trade unions in India have, through the collective bargaining machinery, undoubtedly improved the terms and working conditions of organized labour in India. The working class in India is heir and legatee to the valuable rights won through the endeavours of trade unions in the most industrialized countries. The two large federations of trade unions in India also succeeded in linking themselves to the two major political parties, the Congress and the Communist Parties. They associated themselves thereby with the freedom movement and its objectives and sentiment. In the result, a minimum charter of rights came to be worked into the Statute-book and even the constitution. The rights so won were a well-meaning gift and not the spoils of war.

### **Law And Justice**

One of the three main institutions of democracy is the Judiciary, the other two being the Legislature and the Executive.

Compared to others, India's Judiciary is less corrupt and more reliable. But slowly, there is fear that corruption and nepotism are slowly creeping into Judiciary sector. The system is being politicized to some extent. The caste and communal politics have also affected Judiciary. Abiding by the rule of law is the manifestation of a civilized society. Here also, India is slowly slipping into chaos.

It has been estimated that 30 million cases are pending in the lower and higher courts. This means one in ten families in India is a litigant. Transparency International estimates that corruption in the judicial system may be of the order of Rs. 5000 crores per year, mostly at lower levels of judges and staff. Our judiciary requires drastic reform to simplify laws and procedures. Jack Bell in a book on China cites that the Communist Party established courts for every village, street and city. All minor offences were dealt with by these courts.

It is not as if Indians are corrupt per se. When Indians are in Europe, USA or Singapore, they are not that corrupt. They also work hard. What is wrong in India, is poor management and systems. The Government systems, which employ 20 m, is the most corrupt and least efficient. Other countries in SE and Far East are ahead of us due to our poor management. 1200 management schools are training graduates who enter the private sector only, employing 10 m. The vast 360 m in the unorganized sector is languishing due to poor systems and nil management.

### **Indian Railways (IR)**

Thanks to British foresight, India inherited

an excellent railway system. But India has utterly neglected to expand and modernize the IR system. Instead, the portfolio was consistently given to individuals, most of whom had no genuine interest in making it better.

I have been associated with the Railways in some form or other. For a few years, during the Seventies, I was Advisor to the Parliamentary Committee on Railway Facilities and passenger amenities. Since I failed to influence the IR Board, I wish to relate here a rather funny incident. A meeting of top officials of Western and Central Railways was convened to listen to their views. I requested the GM of Central Railways to start an additional train from Mumbai to Chennai, since the waiting list was two months. The GM said that it was impossible, since there was no platform in VT to accommodate another train. I was in a relaxed mood, and said "Sir, our forefathers in south were monkeys. We shall jump into the train. We do not need platforms. We want more trains. Start a train from Kurla where there must be a free platform". The Chairman, an MP then warned me that I should use better language. To my surprise, the GM started an additional train, and called it Kurla Express. Even such an elementary thinking would not occur to the IR managers, since they are in-bred, and cannot accept suggestions from outside.

In the late fifties, I had the opportunity to travel abroad to UK and US as a member of a Productivity Study team of 11 experts drawn from various sectors. I suggested a Forty point Expansion cum Modernization

program to the Minister. A meeting was called immediately which was attended by the IR Board and 50 senior officials. After my 40 minute presentation, the Minister asked the members whether they agreed to my suggestions. Their candid reply was that it was difficult to implement any modernization programs in IR due to constraints, that outsiders do not know and should not know. The situation is the same today. Laluji increased revenues. But the system did not expand or improve. Long distance movement of passenger traffic is far more than the capacity, and hence passengers are put to great hardship to get berths in overcrowded trains. Waiting List is long. Even now, between Bangalore and Kerala and Chennai etc. 150 buses are plying, which is equal to three train loads. Yet IR would not increase trains. Meanwhile, people are burning trains, and culprits are not punished. We have a weak State.

There is scope for doubling the number of Express trains and their speeds, which is essential for protecting and promoting the Unity and Culture of our country. IR should be corporatised. Railways should concentrate on owning the railway track and infra structure. The Private sector should be given a large responsibility of running trains, maintenance, repairs, manufacturing rolling stock, publicity etc.

Progress of IR during the last 50 years has been at turtle speed. IR is the life line of India – not only for development and security but also for preserving and promoting the Culture and Unity of the country. These should be the Missions of IR.

If fast trains of 200 km speed are to be introduced. People can then settle down where jobs are available, and then go to their home states once a year. We should encourage people to settle down in different parts of the country other than their home states. This is required for the long term homogenisation of India. At present, there is too much of regional feelings, at the expense of national consciousness.

IR should concentrate on Long distance fast Express trains, and leave slow passenger traffic to the road transport. IR itself proclaims that railways are six times more efficient than road transport in fuel consumption. So it is absurd that people should use bus transport to travel 1000 Kms by buses. They would gladly go by train if seats are available. The quota and scarcity situation exists in IR. Telephones, transport and industry have been liberated, and hence they are efficient. IR is a monopoly, which should be dismantled. Managerial culture should be introduced. HRD training should be increased many fold. Private sector should be given a larger share of operations. More trains should be introduced. IR changed the name of VT to CST for political reasons. Why not build another big station and name it as CST.

### **Bureaucracy**

The British designed the Public Administrative System (PAS), primarily intended for governance. Elaborate rules, regulations and procedures are part of the bureaucracy, all of which is sacrosanct. The idea also was to reduce administrative

expenses. The basic premise of bureaucracy is that nobody can be trusted. Therefore, it was expected that officers should go strictly by laws and regulations. There was no scope for discretion, flexibility and autonomy for meeting desired goals. The hierarchy is strictly observed. The file became the scripture on every issue. The whole system is totally impersonal. These aspects are entirely opposed to managerial system and culture, where merit of the issue, personalities involved, criticality of the situation, trustworthiness of persons concerned, risk taking, judgement of the outcome, etc are taken into account in deciding issues.

The problem has become acute because government is in business, which requires a managerial system and culture. Though a few have overcome the constraints and limitations of the system and have produced results, most officials go strictly by the written words in the file. It was found in an analysis in the US that there was a direct correlation between the success of the companies and their management culture. The opposite is in India. In government and government controlled organizations, paper work is the main activity and last word. The system needs review not by Administrative Reforms Commissions but by Management Consultancy firms.

With great foresight and wisdom, the British constituted the ICS cadre for Public Administration as well as specialized cadres for Foreign affairs, Police, Postal, Customs, Audit and Accounts, Forests, Railways etc. Thus they had realized the importance of

specialized services. But the government is utilizing IAS officials for all sectors that have emerged after independence. When government started PSUs, a new cadre, called Industrial Management Pool (IMP) was constituted. But that was discontinued after a couple of years, and IAS officers were assigned the responsibility of managing PSUs. In view of the need for high degree of knowledge in specializations, it is essential to develop specialists with expertise in environment, rural development, commerce and industry etc. It may be difficult to start new cadres for all these sectors.

What can be done, as an interim measure, is to constitute an India Development Service (IDS). During the first 10 years of service, all those IAS officers, who have a flair for managerial competence, should develop expertise in one or two specializations, such as Agriculture and Rural Development, Environment and Forests, Industries and Commerce, Transport and Civil aviation, Public works and Urban Development, Education and Technology, Travel and Tourism, Public Health etc. Those who acquire such knowledge and skills can be seconded to the IDS with specific specializations. Thereafter, they could be given charge of Ministries in which they have developed skills. Others should remain in the IAS. But they can be seconded to IDS if they subsequently develop expertise. An incentive could be given to IDS so as to encourage them to acquire knowledge and skills.

The IAS and other specialized services are

oriented to Administrative skills, where they ensure that rules, regulations, policies, control measures etc are observed. These persons have very little of managerial knowledge and skills. Therefore, all services should be given comprehensive HRD training in Management.

The other reform that would be useful is in the syllabus and examination system. At present, candidates can take optional subjects of their choice. In such a situation, it is difficult to compare relative performance in tests. Therefore, everybody should take the same course and examination. Subjects to be included are: Constitution, History, Public Administration, Culture, Development, Transportation and communication, Management etc. This would ensure that all are appraised on the same subjects.

The ranking should be only after an examination is held at the end of the training. In order to develop them fully, batches of 50 should spend at least two weeks in the cities where IIMs and Development institutes are located, such as NIAS, IISc, TIFR, CDS etc. In each location, trainees should listen to eminent scholars and leaders in various fields. They should also learn the culture of our country in the regions, and thus develop an all India outlook. At present, candidates have no idea about India's glorious heritage in art, literature, science, technology, philosophy culture, values etc. These subjects should become an integral part of training and assessment.

Even after such changes, results cannot

come unless the bureaucratic system is drastically changed. For the PA function, what is required is simplification, elimination of obsolete rules and procedures etc. For the IDS division, the system should be managerial in design and culture with emphasis on entrepreneurship, flexibility, responsibility and power, autonomy etc. At present, even the best of IAS person cannot do much as the system blocks initiative and innovation.

Administrative Reforms Commissions have made many suggestions. But they have not been implemented. Also, the system has not been looked into from a management perspective. Files on every subject start from the bottom, with notings by the Desk Clerk or Case worker. Then the file moves up and down with notings at every stage. Most of them have no clue about the subject matter in the case of development issues. For the PA function, this may be OK.

IDS officers should be given autonomy and power to make use of consultants and specialists. Hundreds of letters come every day, and it is practically impossible to deal with them. Officers are changed every few months. Each person is new to the subject. A great deal of harm is being done to the country and to the citizens involved in development. Everybody condemns the bureaucracy. But nobody has dared to change this system, which is inappropriate.