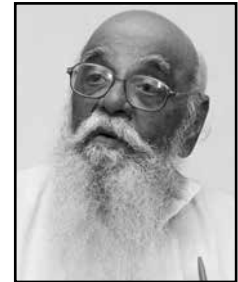


# Ethics in Governance



**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 prophecy 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; a chance, 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.

Here is excerpts from one of his articles on 'Ethics in Governance'

**- Editor**

Material progress of a nation depends on the rapid development and management of the various sectors of the economy, such as agriculture, industry, transport, communication, etc., as well as service sectors such as education, health, etc. But the most important sector for guiding overall progress and peace is Governance, i.e. the political system and the public administrative apparatus, which in turn consist of Political processes, Judiciary, Law and Order, Defence, etc. Though China and India started development together in 1950, China is far ahead of us in every

sector and aspect, primarily on account of its better Governance through its single-party political system and its supportive and efficient governmental machinery. But India claims that its multi-party democracy is a superior system, and that India is the largest democracy in the world. Hundred political parties rule the country, which is least suitable for our conditions. They are constantly quarrelling and scandalizing each other. Politics is first, and country is a mere pawn in their power mongering game, discarding Ethics or Rajanithi. India's bureaucracy,

\* From the writings of late Prof.N.S.Ramaswamy, Founder Director, IIM(Bangalore), and Management Guru, who spoke and wrote extensively on Professional Ethics in all areas of life. He was Patron of this journal.

which was originally meant for conventional public administration, is now being used for development purposes, for which it is not equipped at all. It is blocking progress, rather than supporting, as observed by 200 Directors of Institutes of Management.

India adopted the Parliamentary Democracy system, based on the British Westminster model, which functions well there because Britain is a mono society, where the government does not participate in, or interfere with, economic and social development. India is a plural society, hopelessly divided along many contours and factors, such as religion, caste, ethnicity, linguism, regionalism etc. In India, Government actively participates directly in development as entrepreneur, manager, banker, regulator, controller, etc. In fact, Government is more involved in business management rather than in governance, which is the primary function of government. Thus combination of inappropriate political model and administrative systems has retarded our progress. Further, it has led to innumerable ill-effects, such as political instability, large scale and widespread corruption among politicians and the huge government machinery, increasing violence, degeneration of values, centrifugal forces which may fragment the country, erosion of national unity and pride, linguistic parochialism, persisting poverty and illiteracy for millions, increasing inequality between rich and poor, loss of faith in democracy and government, etc. Solution lies in changing the political model, retaining the essentials of democracy and transforming the public administration machinery to become managerial, for development purposes. Then only, ethical and moral values can be observed.

All these negative tendencies and aberrations are not so much due to the innate nature of citizens, officials in government, politicians in power or managers in business. It is mainly due to the inappropriate governance systems, which compel them to misbehave as they do now, discarding principles of ethics, morals and values. India is a religious country where 80 million go to temples every day. Thousands of Ashrams and Gurus preach ethics. India is a 10,000 years old civilization where thousands of Rishis have written two million pages of spiritual and philosophical literature on Dharma. India has a profound tradition of high ethical and moral values. Our kings were half rulers and half sages. Rama went to forest, rather than rule. Bharatha ruled in the name of Sri Rama. Buddha abandoned a kingdom to seek solutions to man's misery. But some of our politicians are fighting to grab power. It is a tragedy that India has fallen so low in ethics. India is now considered to be one of the most corrupt countries in the world and the Governmental machinery is largely obstructive to development. In many countries in Europe, people hardly go to Church, and yet they are least corrupt and their Governments render excellent service. Ethics in governance can be achieved only through good management systems and culture, which is totally lacking in India's political - administration system. Most Government employees are indifferent and inefficient and even rude to citizens. Further, the Central Government functions only for 5 days a week with several holidays, leave, etc. This is a sad state of affairs.

The Government employs 22 million persons, out of which at least half of them come into contact with people, on whom people depend for information, approvals, licences, permits

and hundred other things which Government controls. Citizens are also dependent on Municipal Administration, Police, Traffic, Judiciary, Water supply, Power, Transport, etc. Invariably Government employees render poor service and are discourteous to citizens who approach them for some help or other. Such behaviour on their part is mainly on account of wrong system and lack of culture.

Workers in the productive sector work for 300 days a year and 48 hours a week. But our Government, on whom citizens depend for a variety of things, work only for 200 days (only 36 hours a week) per year, which just shows the indifference of most of government employees to the citizens. Genuine governance, as per Dharma or Ethics, is for serving people and not to treat them like beggars. Even in the recent CWG in Delhi, the scam is in hundreds of crores. Most of the one lakh crores of rupees, allocated for serving the poor, is consumed by the delivery system, which is largely Government. Thus ethics has no place. Ram Rajya of Gandhiji, is only for preaching and collecting votes. Even some of our temple administration is often corrupt.

The fact that Indians can work better is evident from the fact that well managed private companies, such as Tatas, Hindustan Lever and 500 others operate efficiently with a very high degree of ethical and moral values. All these show the inappropriateness of our governance system. Also, Indians do marvelously well in foreign countries, where they observe rule of law and have a high reputation for integrity and civic consciousness. They do not show the same in India, because of our inappropriate political-administrative system.

This factual situation and anomaly prove that the ambience, environment and the systems in India are not conducive for ethical behaviour on the part of politicians and public administrators. Of course, a segment of both are highly dedicated and ethical, though the large majority does not observe Dharma. Any attempt to improve ethics in governance should start with politicians and their parties.

The inappropriateness of the political system is evident from the fact that even officials at low level have to undergo a series of tests and interviews before they get selected. Rigid qualifications are necessary for a person to become eligible for employment in Government. But those who stand for legislature positions do not require any qualification. All they need is money with which they can do propaganda and induce voters to vote for them. It is well known that liquor and money flow during elections. Also, electorate is pampered with all kinds of favours. Those who vote are largely poor and illiterate who have no clue of whom they are electing and do not know about their competence for the positions. It is also a fact that 30% of legislators have previous criminal records. Every day we see newspapers reporting of massive corruption involving thousands of crores of rupees. Politicians misuse governmental positions and governmental funds for collecting money for their parties as well as for themselves. When an MP or MLA has to spend 5 – 10 crores of rupees to get a party ticket or to get elected, naturally they have to collect the same amount using the official positions in government. And hence the corruption reigns. To maintain a political party requires huge funds, which has

to come from black money.

Such a state of affairs does not exist in European countries, having a democratic system, because in those countries government does not involve in economic and social development. Therefore, the only way by which we can stop the present state of shameful affairs is that the Government should leave these responsibilities to the private sector and not get involved in roles, such as owner, manager and controller of economic development. At the time of Independence, JRD Tata mentioned to Jawaharlal Nehru: "Govern the country and ensure Law and Order. Leave the rest to us". Rajaji also told the Government not to get involved in business. He warned that the quota-permit-licence-inspector-raj would ruin the country's ethical fabric. What they predicted has come true. The Public Affair Centre in Bangalore has studied the amount of corruption in Government Departments. The police are found to be most corrupt. Actually, police is the instrument of the country to ensure Dharma.

Since we cannot change the Parliamentary democracy system with multiple parties, most of the ills mentioned above can be eliminated by effecting electoral reforms. Instead of electing individuals, we should go in for electing Parties to power. Thus each party should select three nominees for each Constituency, after taking into account factors, such as religion, caste, language, charisma, popularity, competence, character, public service, etc. They can also include industrialists, businessmen, professionals and experts from various fields. Thus the aggregate of nominees of all the Constituencies would form a LIST for each Political party. The LIST should be voted on,

instead of individuals as at present. Instead of a simple majority, representation to the Parliament and Assembly should be based on proportion of votes polled for each Party. For the Parliament, Parties, getting less than 5% of all India vote, would not be eligible to send nominees to the Parliament, thus eliminating local parties with no all-India interest. Thus we can also avoid the present anomaly of small parties, with only local following, which are blocking all India policies. This scheme will also eliminate regionalism. Each Party should send nominees from the LIST, making sure that their nomination represents all India with a place for experts, professionals, business men and others, who in the existing system would never get elected. The present aberrations of coalition parties would go. All India parties will emerge. At present, there are only two all-India parties – Congress and BJP – and that too, as unnatural coalitions with no congruence in ideology or policy. This scheme would also eliminate linguistic parochialism, regionalism, etc. Thus we would be changing the system, while retaining the essentials of Parliamentary democracy and multiple parties. Ethics would then be possible.

The next reform required is to split the 10 large States into 30 smaller units. Our States are unequal in size and population as well as in development. Large States cannot be easily managed. So governance is poor in States like UP, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra, as they are too large. Smaller States can be managed better. Government would be closer to the people. Central Government can delegate developmental responsibilities to the States, and concentrate on governance of the

country, which is in a poor state of affairs now. There is now too much of centralization at the Centre. This can be reduced in the proposed set up.

Language is a strong divider of peoples all over the world. India is really facing a great danger of fragmentation, based on linguistic pride and chauvinism. India can be kept together only by having more than one State speaking the same language. Today bigger States are dominating and confronting the Centre, which can be eliminated by creation of small States with less population. Backward States will get better developmental inputs and would progress faster. Sub-regional identities will get fulfilment. Thus Vidarbha, Sourashtra, Marathwada, Telengana etc. will develop faster. Already there is a demand for formation of small States. Governance will improve substantially. More towns will develop as State capitals.

The third reform required is in administration in order to ensure ethics. First of all, obsolete and archaic procedures, file notings, impersonal character of the Government, etc. should be changed. The Public Administration function

for the Government can be continued as at present with simplified rules, regulations and procedures. The development part of the Government should be carried out by a different service, to be called 'India Development Service (IDS)'. Those IAS officers, who are experienced, and show interest in a sector, should be seconded to the IDS. The Government system should be changed to suit development purposes by giving them more autonomy and powers.

Thus ethics in governance can be achieved by the proposed reforms and inculcation of managerial culture and personal touch in Government. Also, large scale training in managerial culture, together with ethical and moral values, should form an integral part of training and assessment. They should be introduced, replacing the present impersonal and routine procedures. Already, people are losing faith in democracy, Government and political parties. Newspapers are with full of stories of scams, scandals, purchase of MLA and MPs etc. Therefore, from the point of view of ethics and morals, the above reforms are essential.



## DO YOU STILL GET ANGRY

One day Buddha was walking through a village. A very angry and rude young man came up and began insulting Buddha. "You have no right teaching others," he shouted. "You are as stupid as everyone else. You are nothing but a fake." Buddha was not upset by these insults. Instead he asked the young man "Tell me if you give a gift to someone, and that person does not take it, to whom does the gift belong?" The man was surprised to be asked such a strange question and answered, "it would belong to me, because I bought the gift." The Buddha smiled and said, "That is correct. And it is exactly the same with your anger. If you become angry with me and I do not get insulted, then the anger falls back on you. You are then the only one who becomes unhappy, not me. All you have done is hurt yourself." "If you want to stop hurting yourself, you must get rid of your anger and become loving instead. When you hate others, you yourself become unhappy; when you love others, everyone is happy."

Source: Internet.