

Basappa Danappa Jatti

*Twenty-second Annual General Body Meeting
October 10, 1976*

I am very happy to be here this evening on the occasion of the Annual General Body Meeting of the Institute. At the outset, I would like to thank you all for having elected me as the President of the Institute with which I had a very meaningful association during last year. May I take this opportunity to share some of my thoughts with this distinguished gathering which constitutes the general body of this professional organisation?

Different epochs in the history of civilisation have been named differently. The present age is generally called the Space Age but it may perhaps be appropriate to describe it as the Administrative Age also. Public administration occupies the central place in a modern society and this is a phenomenon which is more or less independent of individual ideological professions and affiliations. Gone are the days when a government's principal concern lay confined to the fields of law and order and collection of revenues. A modern state has a positive content in its attempts to lend meaning and substance to the life of its citizens. It is committed to all those

policies, plans and programmes which seek to enable even the humblest citizen to live a fuller, richer and more complete life. It has a substantive welfare connotation. As a result, not only does public administration impinge on the life of the citizens at almost all points but at the same time it has tended to become more and more complex and intense in its concern for the well-being of the citizens. Its functions in the traditional regulatory fields have multiplied in size and got enlarged in scope. Simultaneously, it has assumed newer tasks and functions, especially in the developmental and promotional fields. What is more, even where public administration succeeds in achieving quantitative targets, it finds itself confronted, at once and continually thereafter, with citizen demands for improvement in quality of the goods and services delivered.

All these demands that administrators of today possess the necessary technical knowledge, administrative capability, and, above all, social skills and sensitivities of a fairly wide order. If the necessary qualifications and qualities are inadequately present in the administrators, to that extent the cherished goals of development are apt to remain unrealized and citizens' hopes unfulfilled. Administrative modernisation is, thus, the *sine qua non* in the implementation of developmental programmes. It is, indeed, becoming increasingly clear that the single most formidable barrier to human progress today is not the lack or insufficiency of scientific or technological knowledge or even of economic resources but it is the so-called 'administrative lag'.

All this holds good in the case of India also. While the country has since Independence made impressive progress in almost all directions and launched her five year plans, the inadequacies and deficiencies of the administrative system have also been revealed, and these administrative shortcomings have indeed become increasingly evident with the progressive escalation in the scale, variety and pace of developmental programmes. The 'implementation gap', a common occurrence in many fields of our national endeavours, is to a large extent a reflection of the inadequacy or inappropriateness of the administrative input in our plans. Continuous thought to administrative institutions, processes

and procedures is, therefore, absolutely necessary so that public administration ever remains efficient and responsive in both the technical and social senses.

And it is to this end that the Indian Institute of Public Administration has been directing its attention and energy ever since its inception. But the challenge is too big to be handled successfully from a single centre in the country—so vast and diversified as it is. There has to be an all-round consciousness of the need for promoting administrative excellence at all levels of the government—Central, State and local. As the brunt of the developmental tasks is to be borne by those working in the fields, field administration becomes a factor of critical importance in the national development process. The task which Indian administration is called upon to undertake demand a wide range of administrative skills and expertise which point to the urgent need for a certain restructuring and setting into motion appropriate practices and procedures which are inspired by a social purpose, a value system and a sense of urgency. These are indeed only some parts of the larger task of fostering and promoting administrative capabilities at all levels and in all sectors of public administration. In this attempt, our Institute and its distinguished body of members have a vital role to play.

There is hardly any other country in the world today in which public administration is called upon to perform such a wide—and ever widening—range of functions. An expanding administration necessarily means expanding administrative discretion, which is not totally free from dangers. This calls for, more than anything else, greater professionalisation and humanisation of the country's civil services, a greater response from the academic world to find solutions to some of our burning problems. And an administrator today must have proper attitudes towards the people who come to him for help and assistance. The academician devoted to the study of public administration should also soil his hands by visiting the field where problem areas could be identified and solutions conceived. This is an obligation and a responsibility which the academic world and the practising administrators owe to their country. Both must have empathy. They must ever keep before

them the message which Mahatma Gandhi gave. Said the Father of the Nation: "I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to *swaraj* for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and yourself melting away."

This message of Bapuji is more relevant and compelling now than ever before. In giving a concrete shape and operational form to this message I hope, we who have gathered here and all those who are the students and practitioners of public administration will address themselves and the Institute will continue to provide a forum for the cross-fertilisation of ideas and for improving the administrative system of our country.

I am sure you were profited by the deliberations of the Annual Conference held yesterday on the problems of implementation of the twenty-point programme and the weaker sections of the population and you have shown your utmost concern for the needs of the times and the solutions for the masses. I hope and trust that in the years to come you will all play a constructive role to evolve strategies and plans for administrative improvement so that we can fully utilise our vast resources including the human resource to fulfil the dream set before us at the time of the Independence of our country.