

**Item 5: Address by the President of the IIPA,  
Shri K.R. Narayanan**

Hon'ble Home Minister, Shri S.B. Chavan, Dr. Venkatapiah, Shri T.N. Chaturvedi, Dr. V. Subramanian, Shri G.C.L. Joneja, Director of IIPA, Shri M. Wadhvani (I Congratulate him on this occasion), Members of the Executive Council, Members of the faculty of IIPA, Members of the General Body, ladies and gentlemen!

Let me begin by thanking you for the honour you have done to me in electing me to the office of the President of this august body. I am conscious of the distinguished lineage of this high office.

Over its thirty-eight years of existence, the IIPA has emerged as as premier institution for teaching, training, research and consultancy in different areas of Public Administration. It caters to the training needs of the country's senior and middle level administrators and public enterprise executives. The range of the courses it offers is impressive. I am glad to note that during the year 1991-92 as many as 45 training courses including the nine-month long Advanced Professional Programme in Public Administration were conducted and nearly 900 officers of the Central Government, State Governments and Public Sector Undertakings participated in them.

The Institute is a forum of singular importance in providing opportunities for administrators, technocrats and managers of diverse backgrounds to come together to share experiences and discuss issues on a wide range of subjects. I believe that it is also a forum for forward thinking on the larger issues of administration facing the government and the social and economic system.

The role of government and administration has been a changing one in different historical situations. Lord Curzon described the Government of India of the British period of our

history as "a mighty and miraculous machine for doing nothing". After Independence Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru transformed government into a nation-building and development machinery. Today in the era of economic liberalization, the role of the government is changing further. It is withdrawing from the commanding heights of the economy it had occupied and relaxing or removing its overall regulatory functions leaving them to be taken over by private enterprise and market forces. But the State, far from withering away, still remains strong retaining some of its old core functions and assuming new responsibilities in new fields. The challenge to public administration is how to exercise its core functions and to assume new tasks and responsibilities at the same time.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, speaking in the Constituent Assembly had argued: "Whatever the future Government provides for, whether it relieves the people from wants from which they are suffering or not, our Government must do one thing, namely, it must maintain a stable government and maintain law and order". Today the eruption of violence and the rise of disruptive forces in society have made the law and order function of Government an imperative. But maintaining law and order is no longer merely a matter of exercising the police power of the State. In the present age of aroused public consciousness and rising popular expectations, the satisfaction or at least the hope of satisfying the basic and crying needs of the people, has to be built integrally into the strategy for maintaining stability and order in society. Reacting creatively to political aspirations and dealing successfully with persistent political demands of organised sections of the community has also become part of the strategy for keeping law and order. The public services have to be sensitive to these aspects of administration.

While the role of the Government is receding in important areas of economic management and regulation, the need for strengthening it in certain other areas and extending it into new fields has become obvious and been generally accepted. During the last few years Reports of the UNDP and the other international bodies have stressed the supreme importance of human development as an engine of economic development. The U.N. Committee on Development Planning came to the

conclusion that "the process of economic development is coming increasingly to be understood as a process of expanding the capabilities of the people". Today human development factors such as literacy and health and nutrition are emphasized as central to economic progress. It has also been recognized that development strategies must attend to people who live in absolute poverty and need special government support. The new concept of sustainable development has made safeguarding of the natural environment as a factor that must be integrated with development strategies. The role of government is being emphasized in areas of human development and extended to certain hitherto unknown areas. Thus, government the world over seems to be receding and advancing at the same time.

For us in India some of these ideas now being projected on the world scale are rather old and familiar, though we may not have succeeded in implementing them adequately in practice. Jawaharlal Nehru had this to say in the introductory chapter of our First Five Year Plan: "Economic planning has to be viewed as an integral part of a wider process aiming not merely at the development of resources in a narrow technical sense, but the development of human faculties and building up of an institutional framework adequate to the needs and aspirations of the people." Again in the Third Five Year Plan he wrote: "Ultimately it is the development of the human personality that counts. Although planning involves material investment, even more important is the investment in man." The mixed economy and the Welfare State that we have built up over the years were thus based on this approach which has today become part of the new thinking of such institutions as the UNDP and the World Bank. It is this basic thinking behind our policies that Prime Minister Shri Narasimha Rao has been emphasizing while launching his new economic liberalisation policies. It is necessary for our administrators and institutions such as this dealing with administration to bear this enlightened and realistic background of our policies in mind in order to face the new challenges in public administration. It is also necessary for the Indian Institute of Public Administration and other academic institutions in the field to study the problems and the role of administration in this period of

structural changes.

As I mentioned earlier, the new liberalisation thinking has emphasized the central importance of social welfare measures and poverty abolition programmes as an indispensable condition for the success of the economic liberalisation policies. The State, it has been argued, must assume a greater role in these fields, especially in developing countries, while withdrawing more and more from economic and commercial operations. As far as social development is concerned, it has been a basic policy for us in India right from the beginning. In the formulation of the Second Five Year Plan considerable thought was given to the creation of a cadre for implementing welfare measures. Finally, a decision was taken in favour of "the transformation of the existing cadres rather than the establishment of a separate welfare cadre distinct from the normal machinery of Government". Later when massive poverty alleviation programmes were introduced it was the same existing general cadres which were entrusted with the responsibility for implementation. The experience gathered by the administrative cadres in this field will be an asset in the new stage of economic liberalisation. But the general cadres require new training and has to be supported on a wide-spread scale by voluntary and non-governmental agencies at the grassroots, and also by social reform movements from among the people. There is also the need for some kind of scientific and technological extension services personnel working together with the general cadres and voluntary agencies for upgrading the knowledge base and adding to the efficiency and effectiveness of such programmes.

One issue that has cropped up, in the present stage of economic liberalization, as a controversial one is that of the public sector and its administration. Let me first of all emphasize that the public sector was never intended to be tightly controlled by the Government. As Nehru pointed out in the Introduction to the Third Five Year Plan: "It is neither necessary nor desirable that the economy should become a monolithic type of organization offering little play for experimentations either as to forms or as to modes of functioning. Nor should expansion of public sector mean centralisation of decision making and of exercise of authority.

In fact, the main aim should be to secure an appropriate devolution of functions and to ensure to public enterprises the fullest freedom to operate within a framework of broad directives and rules of the game...." In my view, one of the major reasons for the failure of many, but not all, public sector undertakings was due to departures from this original concept of autonomy. The Indian Institute of Public Administration has studied in the past the issues involved in the running of public enterprises. There is need to investigate the issues involved, again, objectively in the present changed context.

The field of general administration is teeming with all manner of issues. I shall not go into them today. I should like to invite attention to one important aspect of administration which is, perhaps, not within the scope of the charter of this Institute, viz., the role of the lower civil servants. They constitute the immense majority of the administrative set-up and on their dedication and efficiency depend the success of much of the operations of the Government. For the public the face of the Government is, often, the face of the clerk. But they are the most neglected and discontented section of the bureaucracy. Unless the higher civil servants take the initiative to elicit the emotional loyalty of this vast salaried proletariat and instil in them a sense of discipline and public service, the efficiency of the administration is bound to remain low and its image unattractive among the people. That requires combination of the disciplinary and the human approach. To use the phrase human approach in the context of civil service may sound a little odd. Mr. Peter Hennessey in the classic book *Whitehall* quotes one civil servant saying to another: "It is enough to be a civil servant. I don't think it is enough to be a human being." But to my mind, a bit of the human touch combined with discipline and in-service training will energize the vast lower civil service and make the administration more effective and popular.

This great Institute of Public Administration which as a think tank of the Government has done outstanding work and signal service to the nation has to mobilise all the intellectual and professional resources to cope with the challenges being thrown up by changing times. In this it has to carry the rank and file of the public services with it, a rank and file many of

those members, like several in the higher civil services also, might often say to themselves, as a Canadian army saying goes, "to err is human, but to be paid for it is divine".

The Indian Institute of Public Administration has established a reputation for a balanced blend of activities in the spheres of training, research and consultancy. The journals being published under its aegis are highly regarded in academic and professional circles. It has also been successful in encouraging debates and discussions on issues of topical interest and fostering ties with intellectuals, administrators and with universities. May I wish the Institute further successes in the future in its noble work.

Thank you. (Loud Cheers).