



भारतीय लोक प्रशासन संस्थान

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Building Capacity for Good Governance

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Karnataka Regional Branch

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Virtual Newsletter

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Views expressed by the contributors are personal and do not represent the views or position of the Editorial Board or the Executive Committee of the Branch.

Chief Editor



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A Note from the Chief Editor



S. Ramanathan, IAS (Retd.)

Chairman,
Indian Institute of Public Administration
Karnataka Regional Branch, Bengaluru

I am happy to place before our readers the **June 2021** issue of our *Virtual Newsletter*. This is our 11th issue, since we began this initiative, and we are numbering it as such. The **Lead Article**, this time, is by our distinguished EC and Editorial Board member, **Dr. A. Ravindra**. He writes of the Buddha's *Middle Path* as the talisman during these distressing times.

In our section on **Policy Matters** in Karnataka, we draw attention to the ₹1,250 cr. Covid Relief Package announced by the Chief Minister of Karnataka, **Shri B.S. Yediyurappa** to those in deep distress in the unorganized sector, as well as farmers.

In our section on **Contemporary Matters**, we carry an article on **COVID-19 - Communication Strategy and Campaigns**, by **Dr. Annapoorna Ravichander**, and **Dr. Meena Nair** of **Public Affairs Centre**, Bengaluru.

In our report on the activities of our Branch, we carry the report of a Web-Talk by **Prof. Rumki Basu** on **Democracy and Public Policy in the Post-COVID-19 World: Choices and Outcomes**.

In the **Civic Matters** section, **Ms. Kathyayini Chamaraj** expresses her opinion that **Decentralised Disaster Preparedness is Needed**.

In our **Book Review** section, we carry the review of **Mr. Vinod Rai's** book, **Rethinking Good Governance: Holding to Account India's Public Institutions**. The book has been very ably reviewed by **Mr. T. Sethumadhavan**, IA&AS (Rtd.).

And in our **Miscellany** section, we reproduce the news report of an unusual act of kindness by a serving Civil Servant of Karnataka.

I wish to add a disclaimer here that the views expressed by the contributors are personal and do not represent the views or position of the Editorial Board or the Executive Committee of the Branch.

Do write in, with your responses, views and ideas for improvement of the Newsletter.

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Lead Article

Buddha's Middle Path - Need of the Hour

Source: *Deccan Herald* dt. May 24 2021



A. Ravindra, IAS (Retd.)
Former Chief Secretary
Government of Karnataka

The full moon day of last month (May 26th, *vaishaka purnima*) carried special significance in the history of India and of Buddhism in particular. This was the day when Gautama Siddharta who was to become the *Enlightened One*, the Buddha, was born 2561 years ago. This was also the day he attained enlightenment and the day he departed from this earth. What a coincidence of stars and events in the life of a person, who chose to give up the luxuries of a prince and the power of the palace, to enlighten the world about the meaning of suffering and the path to liberation!

As the world is caught up in the vortex of a virus and people are passing through the pains of a pandemic, tossed from the ICU of a hospital to the isolation of a room in the house, seeking refuge in vaccines, ventilators and drugs, the message of the Buddha comes like a balm to soothe the nerves and calm the mind. His teachings, more than ever before, seem strikingly relevant for the present troubled times. They provide an answer to the individual, suffering from disease, anxiety and fear, to the society divided by caste, colour and religion, and to the ruling class torn asunder by polarised ideologies and a mad struggle for power.

Middle Path

According to the Buddha, everything in the world is transient, nothing endures; birth and death, growth and decay are part of the natural process. So there is no meaning in any kind of panic flight from pain and death. The root cause of suffering is desire, not the desire to live a happy and good life, but the desire born of selfishness, which in turn causes hatred, slander and violence. Overcome suffering by following the 'middle path' (*madhyamaka*) which steers clear of the extremes of asceticism and sensual indulgence. This can be achieved by adopting the eight-fold path that consists of right view, right aspiration, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

The Middle Path is the core of Buddha's teaching and can be adopted in all walks of life. It essentially implies avoiding extremes, such as what we are witnessing today - narrow nationalism and unbridled liberalism, religious bigotry and decrying religion, obsession with a glorious past and justifying all things considered modern; in short, blind faith in what one considers right, without consideration for the other's point of view. The Buddha's call to avoid extreme ways of practice and walk the middle way of reasonableness is the need of the

hour. Buddhism inculcates a lofty system of ethics and what is enunciated in the Eight-Fold Path is a simple yet powerful guide for all individuals, including those in high places - political and business leaders, religious seers, bureaucrats and professionals.

The Buddha was a great social reformer and sent out a strong message of social equality, perhaps the first great historical personage to do so - that everyone, regardless of caste, creed, gender or status had the capacity for enlightenment - and translated his precept into practice. One day, he came across an untouchable, Nadhi, carrying excrement. Conscious of his lowly status, the poor man tried to avoid the Master but the latter intercepted him, and in the jostle, Nadhi fell down and the excrement spilled over. With great compassion, the Buddha not only helped him rise but exhorted him to become his disciple. He also prohibited discrimination against women. Though initially reluctant, after being persuaded by his step-mother and his close disciple, Ananda, he admitted females into the Buddhist monastic order and even praised their attainments.

And to those who ruled the kingdoms of his days, this is what the Buddha had to say: *Lead others, not by violence, but by righteousness and equity*. If only the leaders of today, in our country and elsewhere, can listen to the voice of the great Master! Ashoka, the celebrated monarch, who after a bloody battle, gave up warfare and turned to Buddhism set an example of a just ruler. In one of his edicts, he says: *“Do not speak or act with ill intent toward other religions, instead, it is better to tell people what is good and healthy, and to live as a human being”*. Famed for his welfare activities, Ashoka sounds strikingly modern when he exhorted the employers to treat servants and workers decently, not to give them tasks beyond their strength, provide them adequate wages and care for them in times of sickness.

Although Buddhism has little presence in the land of its birth, it has left a deep impact on the artistic and cultural heritage of the country through magnificent architecture, paintings and scholarly literature. The Buddha is venerated as an *avatar* by the Hindus and adored by all sections as a messenger of peace, love and non-violence. His doctrine of equality so impressed Babasaheb Ambedkar that he, along with 3,65,000 followers, converted to Buddhism on October 14, 1956. He also penned a book titled *Buddha and the Dhamma*. Interest in Buddhist teachings has revived in India with large numbers of people taking to the practice of *vipassana*, a Buddhist technique of meditation. Music lovers may be interested to know about a rock band called *Dhamma Wings*, consisting of five Mumbai musicians who are spreading Buddha's teaching on equality, and campaigning against the injustice of the caste system, through their songs.

The influence of Buddhism beyond India's borders has been more profound, with its wings spread across the neighbouring nations of China, Japan, Tibet, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. Dalai Lama (Tibet) and Thich Nat Hahn (Vietnam) are recognised as world religious leaders.

In today's world of bitter religious and political conflicts, increasing inequalities and inequities, and unscrupulous commercial competition, the 'middle path' laid out by the Buddha is the only way to save mankind from the evils of hatred, vituperation and violence. The *Light of Asia*, as Edwin Arnold called the Buddha in his poetic masterpiece of the same name, is also the *Light of the World* holding out the torch of hope for peace and harmony. One of the Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations to be achieved by 2030

is 'Peace and Justice'. It would be appropriate for the UN to declare the birth anniversary of the Buddha as the *Day of the Middle Path* to remind world leaders of their responsibility in moving towards its lofty goal.

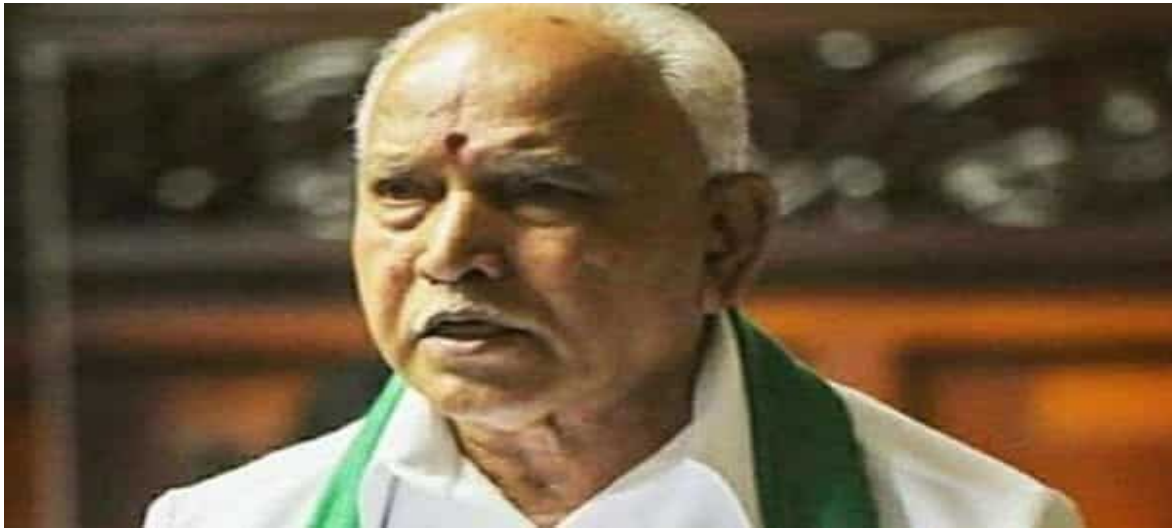
Let me conclude by recalling what the Buddha told his disciples: "Teach this triple truth to all: *A generous heart, kind speech and a life of service and compassion are the things which renew humanity*".

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Policy Matters **Karnataka**

Karnataka Provides ₹1,250 cr. Covid Relief Package

Source: *Mint* dt. 19 May 2021



arnataka Chief Minister Shri B.S. Yediyurappa

Karnataka Chief Minister Shri B.S.Yediyurappa announced a COVID-19 Relief Package of ₹1,250 crore recently. The Karnataka government said it will provide ₹3,000 each for auto/taxi drivers and construction workers; and ₹2,000 for workers in the unorganised sector.

"Our government had given financial packages to various sectors during the COVID first wave. Despite that, as the current restrictions have affected the livelihood of those with unorganised sector and farmers, to mitigate its impact we are announcing a relief programme of more than ₹1,250 crore," Shri Yediyurappa said.

Further, the CM said ₹10,000 relief will be given to growers for per hectare loss. He said the relief will benefit about 20,000 farmers and may cost ₹12.73 crore.

For the losses suffered by fruit and vegetable growers, ₹10,000 financial relief will be given to growers, limiting it to one hectare, the CM added.

Besides, ₹3,000 each relief to auto, taxi and maxi cab drivers will provide benefit to 2.10 lakh beneficiaries and it may cost ₹63 crore, Shri Yediyurappa added.

He said that ₹3,000 each will be given to labourers who have registered with Karnataka Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board, costing ₹494 crore.

" ₹2,000 each will be given to those under unorganised sector like barbers, washermen, tailors, porters, ragpickers, potters, goldsmiths, mechanics, blacksmiths, household workers, cobblers, among others, benefiting 3.04 lakh people, and will cost about ₹60.89 crore," the Karnataka CM said.

Roadside vendors, those registered under *Aatma Nirbhar* package will be given ₹2,000 each, he said, adding that it will benefit about 2.20 lakh people and cost ₹44 crore. Also, artists and art teams will be given ₹3,000 each, benefiting 16,095 beneficiaries and will cost ₹4.82 crore.

The CM said his government was announcing the package, despite the state facing financial constraints, and is standing by the people during this difficult time.

The Chief Minister also announced that Karnataka has purchased order for over three crore vaccine doses at a cost of ₹1,000 crore.

₹50,000 from SDRF fund will be given in advance for each Gram panchayat, the CM added.

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Contemporary Matters

COVID-19 - Communication Strategy and Campaigns



Dr. Annapoorna Ravichander, Head, Policy Engagement and Communication, Public Affairs Centre, Bengaluru (*seen at left*); and
Dr. Meena Nair, Head, Research, Public Affairs Centre, Bengaluru

The COVID-19 pandemic has aroused various emotions in the minds of people in several ways. While some people have understood the health implications, many have confined their comprehension to superstitious beliefs and acts. Some of the key points that emerge from these diverse viewpoints that need to be tackled while designing awareness campaigns for such events are:

Analysing the Audience

A vibrant and strong communication strategy should focus on empowerment, exercise and conformity. For example, the concerned audience needs to know that they have to conform to the practice of washing hands and maintain hygiene, both personal and external, to be safe from the corona virus. By doing this they are not only keeping themselves safe, they are also contributing to keeping others safe.

Overcoming Stigma and Superstition

In a country like India and especially in rural areas, superstitions and stigma are often attached to any sort of calamity. In order to weed this out, it will be useful if community / religious leaders are included for dissemination of precautions and adherence to simple safety measures to battle the pandemic. Scientifically informed radio programmes by other influential leaders can help in addressing stigma and superstition related to the pandemic.

Activating a community feedback system would also be extremely useful.

Disseminating Communication to the Last Mile

- Use of Remote technology
- Use of online means such as *WhatsApp*, hotlines (supported by mobile technology), phone trees or simple phone calls to a toll number. In the case of poor connectivity, 2-way radios can be employed.
- Community Radio is another means of communication platform.

Collective Approach - Slot timings where different stakeholders can come together to discuss, address and provide suggested solutions based on the local needs

Individual Approach - Bring different Stakeholders – a Government representative, Gram Panchayat member, school teacher, religious leader, parent, citizen from the village/district to answer Q & A from their respective perspectives.

In addition, “*Call-in-Radio*” shows/programmes can also be planned; this may bring in more queries due to anonymity

Leverage Academic and Educational Institutions to Build Awareness

The lockdown has put a standstill to all academic activities, especially attending schools and colleges.

- Request for volunteers from the community to help, address the needs of the people and connect the rural people to real time stories.
- Engage with religious leaders and faith-based communities

One of the key ingredients in preparing a community strategy in such cases is to build the TRUST of the community. This can be done by:

- Understanding their context-specific needs and information requirements;
- Engaging with them by providing actionable solutions and information;
- Keeping minds open to receive feedback and act on them;
- Including them in developing solutions; and

- Acting on their needs.

TRUST stands for:

T-Togetherness; **R**-Reliable; **U**-Understand needs; **S**-Sensitive to needs; **T**-Topical

Developing Appropriate Communication Materials

- Short videos in regional languages to showcase success stories, preventive measures, tackling the pandemic, symptoms etc.
- Posters and leaflets (pictorial representations);
- Platform/Fora to discuss these topics - there could be separate groups for students, parents, village representatives, women and also a combination of these representatives.

Other Strategies could include

- Encouraging establishment of isolation groups where elders and people with underlying health conditions (comorbidities) can be addressed through specific approaches;
- Collecting water, food and other essentials (can be done by volunteers);
- Introducing a simple signage system/symbol can be pasted on the doors of such centres/houses to indicate that support/help is required;
- Installing hand washing stations at appropriate places for example, market areas;
- Informing strategic and operational decision making; and
- Providing real-time information based on social analysis and community feedback data.

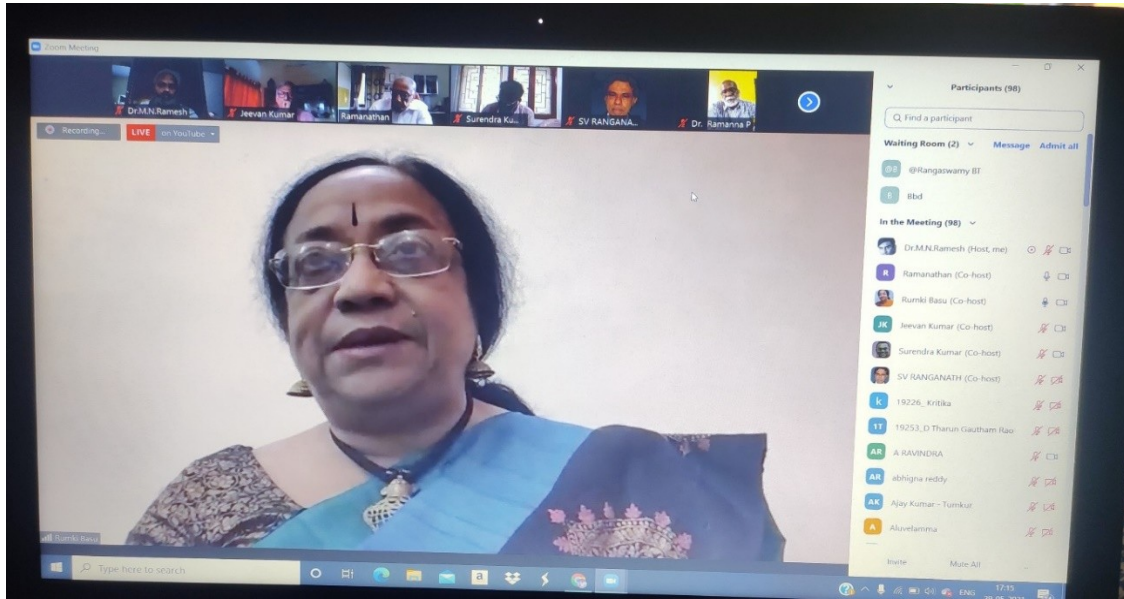
Watch this video for more information: <http://pafglobal.org/audio-and-visual/>

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Report of IIPA-KRB Activities

Web-Talk by **Prof. Rumki Basu** on

Democracy and Public Policy in the Post-COVID-19 World: Choices and Outcomes



The **Karnataka Regional Branch** of the **Indian Institute of Public Administration**, in association with the **Department of Political Science** of **Bangalore University** and the **Political Science Collective**, organized a web-talk by **Prof. Rumki Basu**, Professor of Public Administration at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, on her recently published edited book, *Democracy and Public Policy in the Post-COVID-19 World: Choices and Outcomes*, on 29th May 2021 over Zoom. The web-talk was chaired by **Mr. S.V. Ranganath**, IAS (Retd.), former Chief Secretary of the Government of Karnataka and current Vice-Chairman, IIPA-KRB.

In his Introductory Remarks, Chairman of the Branch, **Mr. S. Ramanathan**, complimented Prof. Basu for bringing out a timely publication, as the pandemic is raising several policy questions and issues.

Prof. Rumki Basu, in her talk, gave an outline of the book, and said that it revisits policy processes at three levels, central, state and local, against the background of the pandemic. She made a strong case for building up an appropriate Welfare Architecture, with a world-class Public Service Delivery System in India. 5 to 6 per cent of the budget as well as GDP needs to be spent on the Social Sector, in particular on Health and Education. We need to plan for the 90 per cent workers who are in the informal sector. Soft democracies like India can be turned around with requisite political will. Our democracy needs to strengthen electoral accountability and limit the abuse of power. The only way to make the transition from a procedural to a substantive democracy is for India to adopt major public policies with a strong Welfare State agenda, she said.

Discussant **Dr. D. Jeevan Kumar** stated that if we are to understand where the pandemic is coming from, and if Public Policies are to respond satisfactorily to it, we need to do two things: (1) Undertake a BIG Picture diagnosis of the problem; and (2) Respond with a Welfare Architecture, based *not* on New Public Management but on a radically different paradigm of New Public Service.

Mr. S.V. Ranganath, IAS (Retd.), who chaired the web-talk, stated that the pandemic has brought to the fore the enormous challenges of governance in a country of India's size and population. He stressed the need for citizens to have undifferentiated access to public goods

and services. In his view, four areas need particular Public Policy focus and attention: Primary health, primary education, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and empowerment of women.

Dr. S.Y. Surendra Kumar, Associate Professor of Political Science, Bangalore University, Bengaluru, welcomed the speaker and guests, and anchored the programme. **Dr. M.N. Ramesh**, Assistant Professor of Political Science at Rani Channamma University, Belagavi proposed a vote of thanks. The event had more than 100 participants.

Link to web-talk is given below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FYJyMhEWel0>

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Civic Matters

Decentralised Disaster Preparedness Needed



Kathyayini Chamaraj
Executive Trustee, CIVIC Bangalore

The success in handling COVID in Mumbai has been attributed to the setting up of decentralised ward-level war-rooms by Mumbai's Commissioner, Iqbal Singh Chahal. Calls to decentralize management of COVID have been appearing from all sides. Mr. M. Ramachandran, former Union Urban Development Secretary, and Mr. Kamal Kishore, Member of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), had pointed out, last year itself, the need for more granular, decentralised institutional mechanisms at ward and area levels, below the state, district and city levels, to effectively manage COVID. It is heartening that Karnataka has decided to copy the Mumbai model and issued a notification on 7th May 2021 that Ward Disaster Management Cells will be set up in each of the 198 wards in BBMP.

Actually, Karnataka is one of the few States that has a decentralised mechanism written into Section 6(8) of the Ward Committee Rules of 22.06.2016, which says that there shall be a Ward Disaster Management Cell (WDMC) under the Ward Committee. It is necessary to recall that WDMCs had been set up already a year ago. When the lockdown was announced in March 2020, the BBMP Council did not meet to discuss its responsibilities under the NDM

Act and failed to invoke the Ward Committee Rules and constitute the WDMCs. This was a gross abdication of responsibility on its part.

Noting this failure, CIVIC had written to the Hon'ble Chief Justice of Karnataka High Court in April 2020 pointing out this lapse. The HC had been rapping BBMP for its inability to identify all the shelterless and needy during the lockdown and failing to meet their basic needs. The Hon'ble CJ asked BBMP to respond to the mail sent by CIVIC, suggesting that setting up the WDMCs could help BBMP handle the pandemic better. Taking note of the direction of the HC, BBMP set up WDMCs in all 198 wards within two days and also issued circulars on their roles and responsibilities. Later, the RDPR Secretary, appointed to mobilise community participation in handling COVID, even set up Polling-Booth-Level Committees with volunteers and also trained them and the WDMCs. But these never really became functional due to the indifference of councillors towards grassroots institutions and involvement of citizens.

However, the BBMP circulars issued in April 2020 dealt with the limited role of WDMCs in 'responding' to COVID. But what was needed for the WDMCs was a General Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), as it exists at the State and District levels, which would provide long-term local preparedness for dealing with all kinds of disasters, for instance floods and fires, and not just knee-jerk 'response' to COVID.

Hence, through a consultative process, a Draft General SOP for WDMCs incorporating all the four principles of disaster management - '**Preparedness, Response, Recovery and Mitigation**' was framed by CIVIC and sent to the State Government in August 2020, and also to a member of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). In the urban context, disaster preparedness, mitigation and response are affected by the following: high population density; high vulnerability; poorly built houses; insufficient regulation/enforcement of building standards; etc. This is because urban poor and migrant poor live in slums without adequate basic amenities, usually on marginalized land that is vulnerable to hazards.

It was hoped that the General SOP for WDMCs would be notified for the entire state, and by the NDMA for the whole country, with suitable modifications, so that there is **capacity building and preparedness to address all four aspects of disaster management at a decentralised ward level at all times**. Though the mails were acknowledged and action promised, there was no further response to them.

The time when the first wave COVID cases started coming down should have been actually the time when Karnataka's preparedness to meet the second wave of COVID, and the ones still expected to come, should have been strengthened.

The General SOP prepared by CIVIC recommended that Basic Disaster Management Skills need to be imparted to the WDMCs and Booth-level Committees, *before a crisis strikes*. These committees need to develop and keep ready a Ward Disaster Management Plan (WDMP) and communicate the same to the community. The WDMP has to identify threats and spots of potential disasters - floods, fires, etc.; build separate teams for handling various

activities; list “safe spaces”, such as community buildings, for use before, during and after disasters; create a database of vulnerable people and their needs, etc.

A contingency fund needs to be given to the WDMC to make emergency purchases and maintain a stock of disaster relief items. CIVIC recommended that the WDMC should be a single-point local contact for a city’s war-room, volunteer groups, etc., and host a single ward-level helpline to respond to citizens’ needs and also their grievances 24/7.

The latest Karnataka GO recognises several of these points, but it too is not a general SOP for WDMCs. It is only a more detailed one than the ones issued earlier on ‘*Responding*’ to COVID. The aspects of ‘*Preparedness, Recovery and Mitigation*’ are missing from this GO. It remains to be seen how well it will be implemented, given the lack of training and preparedness of the WDMCs.

‘*Recovery*’ involves short-term and long-term activities undertaken after a disaster that are designed to return people and property to at least their pre-disaster condition of well-being. Mitigation involves sustained activities undertaken in the long term, after one disaster and before another strikes, that are designed to prevent emergencies and reduce damage. They need to spell out how these WDMCs should function from now onwards, so that the next time a crisis of any magnitude hits, these cells are institutionally equipped to provide support.

Long-term mitigation measures need to ensure that all construction projects in the ward conform to the standards and specifications laid down for prevention of disasters and mitigation by the National Authority, State Authority and the District Authority; ensure piped drinking water supply and water quality monitoring; promote personal and community latrines; ensure sewage and drainage systems; improve solid waste management systems; etc.

One hopes that we will see an effective and systematised response to disasters in future at the decentralized ward level.

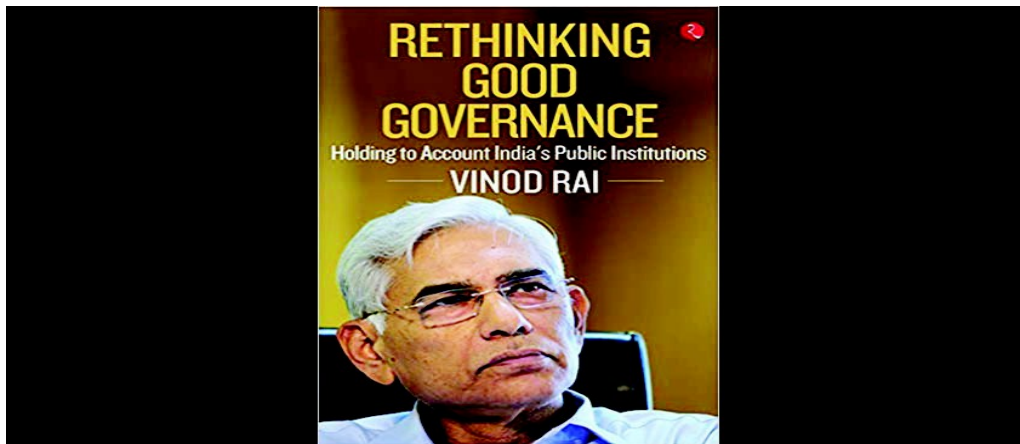
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Book Review

Thayyil Sethumadhavan, IA&AS (Rtd.)



Holding India’s Public Institutions to Account



The makers of our Constitution created the basic infrastructure required for the survival and development of the Sovereign Democratic Republic of India through various public institutions including the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary, among others. The political leaders of the post-independence era, starting with the first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, dedicated themselves to the task of promoting and developing the public institutions which were the cornerstones of democratic India. But looking back, has the performance of our horizontal political institutions been on the desired lines in the recent years? In the book under discussion¹, **Vinod Rai**, who had a distinguished career in the civil service and was one of the most successful Comptroller & Auditor-Generals (CAG) of the country analyses the functioning of these institutions objectively and concludes that while some of them have indeed worked well to advance the cause of society, some others have largely failed in their tasks. Rai also offers valuable suggestions for their improved working.

In a proficient Foreword to the Book, the late Pranab Mukherjee, former President of India expresses the view that “*Rethinking Good Governance*” will go a long way in creating public awareness for robust and participative governance. As he elaborates, the country has established a successful parliamentary democracy, independent judiciary and strong institutions to support our democratic structure, but in the recent past, their credibility has come under a cloud.

The Parliament

At the outset, Vinod Rai raises a question whether India’s Parliament *will* emerge as the main pillar of democracy and quotes the late Somnath Chatterjee, former Speaker of Parliament, to remind that “*though Parliament may still be a great institution, its members are no longer great men; and how a great institution can remain great in the hands of small men?*”² The fall in the stature and integrity of our parliamentarians will be evident from the fact that, Rai points out, 43 per cent of the MPs of the 2019 Lok Sabha have criminal cases pending against them³, including for murder, attempt to murder, kidnapping and crimes against women.

Rai establishes with statistics that the incidence of disruption in the Parliament has been on the increase and as a result, the time for transacting business has drastically come down. The

¹ ***Rethinking Good Governance: Holding to Account India’s Public Institutions*** by Vinod Rai. Rupa Publications India Private Limited (2019). Rs.595.00

² *Keeping the Faith: Memories of a Parliamentarian*; Harpin Collins (2014)

³ Analysis by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR)

disruptions also dilute the sacrosanct duty of Parliament to carry out effective scrutiny of governance. Vinod Rai comes to the sad conclusion that as a consequence of the drawbacks highlighted in the Book, the Parliament is becoming an increasingly ineffective instrument for timely legislative intervention, thereby ceding space to judiciary or other non-elected institutions.

Supreme Court of India

In contrast though, the Supreme Court of India is providing a bedrock for good governance, despite its own shortcomings including the collegial system of appointments of judges, etc. The chapter on the Supreme Court deals extensively with some of the landmark judgments which upheld the Basic Features of the Constitution. On the downside, Rai dwells on the so-called judicial activism, but justifies it in cases where the administrative system has broken down. The Supreme Court had its own pitfalls, as when four senior-most judges held a press conference to criticize the system of allocation of cases followed by the then Chief Justice; also, the legacy of the huge pendency of cases across the judiciary. The author warns that instances such as press conferences by judges, allegations from within and opacity in decision-making will chip away at the hard-earned credibility of this venerable institution.

The Election Commission (ECI) and the Comptroller & Auditor General of India (CAG)

Two public institutions created by the Constitution and functioning with impeccable credibility, as brought out in the book, are the Election Commission of India (EC) and the Comptroller & Auditor-General of India (CAG). On the performance of the EC, Rai exclaims that it is amazing that the same bureaucracy that is sometimes purported to be lacking in probity and professional integrity manages to overcome its own obvious inadequacies to deliver such immaculate elections. He considers EC as a beacon of hope and exhorts that it should maintain its immaculate reputation built over the years by withstanding political pressures and tribulations.

The author reckons the CAG as the Fifth Pillar of Democracy and as a former CAG, emphatically denies that it slows down the decision-making process through its performance audits. There are inadequacies in the area of jurisdiction of the CAG like the absence of provisions to audit Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) and Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) among others, frequent delays in tabling of audit reports and so on. The CAG's role, Vinod Rai points out, does not end with placing the reports in the Parliament, but must extend to educating public opinion on the performance of the government through social accountability.

Civil Services

The chapter on the Civil Services under the caption, "*Has the Steel Frame Sagged?*" will be of special interest. The Colonial Government had placed great emphasis on an independent and efficient Civil Service, the *Steel Frame*, and it was expected that the traditions would continue in independent India. In the first few decades after independence, the Civil Services of India proved their mettle; but with passage of time, cracks have been seen in the quality of the Steel Frame. Vinod Rai feels that the Civil Services are often perceived as lacking in competence and professionalism, harbouring political bias, with declining independence, apart from concerns relating to lack of probity. There are several factors which have

contributed to the decline such as short tenure of postings, political interference, lack of specialization, faulty performance appraisals etc. Vinod Rai cautions against piecemeal changes to reform the Civil Services and advocates out-of-the box thinking to bring about a holistic change in their structure and functioning. A major contributor to the lack of motivation among the new breed of Civil Servants is the higher ages at which new officers join the Services. The incentives to perform better will need to be actuated by more professional appraisals and career advancements opportunities. Hopefully, the author's masterly analysis of the state of decline in the Civil Services and the measures suggested for rectification will receive the attention of policy makers.

Central Vigilance Commission and Central Investigating Agency (CBI)

While on the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC), the author feels that as a standalone institution under the administrative control of the Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms, CVC may not be able to carry out its mandated duties competently. Time has come to reassess the role and functions of CVC *vis-a-vis* those of the Lokpal and to arrive at the optimal system to enable CVC to play an effective role in enhancing the values of ethics and accountability in administration.

The book also includes an interesting analysis of the role and credibility of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the context of the recent hideous tussle between two of its top functionaries, withdrawal of general consent for investigation by a few States and the need to restore its credibility as an institution. Creation of a dedicated cadre of officers with status similar to the officers under the CAG may be a viable option.

Right to Information / Central Information Commission

The book also includes a study on the functioning of the Central Information Commission (CIC) and concludes that the transparency law has opened a new horizon for citizens to participate in governance. The chapter also discusses, in detail, the amendments proposed to the RTI Act.

Miscellaneous Studies

In the chapter on the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Vinod Rai concludes that RBI cannot have absolute autonomy from the government in view of the overlapping roles, but a fine balance has to be maintained by the Governor, in his relations with the Finance Minister.

The last two chapters in the book are on Sports Administration and Temple Administration, in the context of Vinod Rai's assignments as the Chairman of the Committee of Administration (COA) for the Board of Cricket Control of India (BCCI) and as the Supreme Court-appointed Auditor for inventorying the treasures of the Padmanabha Swami Temple. There is also a case study on the infamous Adarsh Cooperating Housing Society in Mumbai, which was the subject of an audit review by the CAG. These are illustrative and analytical, with limited significance to the main thrust of evaluating Public Institutions.

On the whole, Vinod Rai's book is a valuable addition to the literature on Accountability of Public Institutions and Good Governance.

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Miscellany

An Unusual Act of Kindness by a Civil Servant

Source: *The Times of India*, Bangalore dt. 21st May 2021

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Orphaned Ceto finds home in B'luru IAS officer's family

SruthySusan.Ullas@timesgroup.com

Bengaluru: Eight-year-old Ceto, a black labrador, has been doing the rounds on various social media platforms for the past two days after she lost her parent to Covid. People have been rooting for her to find a foster home quickly. On Wednesday, an IAS officer in Bengaluru came forward to adopt her, a joyful end to a sad story.

Ceto's parent, 48-year-old Naveen Sriram, professor at a private college and resident of Kanakapura Road, passed away on May 9. He was the second victim in the family — his father lost his battle to the virus on May 4. They are survived by Naveen's mom and aunt, both in their 70s.

"They loved Ceto like family, but the two elderly women are in no position to take care of her. They lack finances as well as physical strength to take her out for a walk, among other things. They had no choice but to give her away," said family friend Kumaran S Talwar.

Film director Kavitha Lankesh, who gave Ceto as a pup to Naveen eight years ago, heard of their dilemma and tweeted about it. The post soon went viral. "Naveen had adopted two pups from me and one died a few years back. It's tough times for them," she said.

An IAS officer, who wished not to identify herself, came to know about this and decided to adopt Ceto. "My husband and I prefer to keep a low profile. Let's just say she's being taken to a home in Bellandur with two teenage boys, a labrador and a cat," she told TOI.



Ceto's parent died due to Covid-19

► 'Many abandoning pets', P 2

IIPA-KRB Virtual Newsletter

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