INDIAN INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
Karnataka Regional Branch, Bengaluru

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Virtual Newsletter

ವಿದ್ಯುನ್ಮಾನ ಸುದ್ದಿಪತ್ರ

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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T.M. Vijay Bhaskar, IAS (Retd.)
Former Chief Secretary, Government of Karnataka
Chairman, Karnataka Administrative Reforms Commission-II
Chairman, Indian Institute of Public Administration – Karnataka Regional Branch

I am happy to place before our readers the **April 2023** issue of our *Virtual Newsletter*. This is our **33rd issue,** since we began this initiative.

Our **Lead Article** is by **Mr. V. Balasubramanian,** IAS (Retd.). Titled, "*Ethics for Administrators*", it is based on a talk delivered by him at the **Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration**, Mussourie recently.

Our **Lead Feature** is on "*Rural Public Libraries becoming Knowledge Centres*". It is based on an interview with **Smt. Uma Mahadevan**, IAS, Additional Chief Secretary, Panchayati Raj, Government of Karnataka, which appeared in the *New Sunday Express* recently.

In the section on *Audit Matters*, **Mr. T. Sethumadhavan**, IAAS (Rtd.) evaluates the **Performance Audit** of the **CAGI** of **Kalyana Karnataka Development Board.**

In the Section titled, *Communication Pulse*, we have **Dr. Annapoorna Ravichander,** Executive Director at Public Affairs Foundation writing on *Data Science in Government.*

In the section on *Gender Matters,* **Dr. Debangana Chatterjee** writes on *Intersectionality in Gender Mainstreaming.*

We carry a brief report of the launch of a very useful app called *Raitha Sayak* App for the benefit of farmers.

In our *Book Review* column, we carry the review of the memoir of **Mr. V. Balasubramanian**, IAS, (Retd.), *Glimpses of the Steel Frame* which appeared in *The Hindu* recently.

In the section on *IIPA-KRB EC Members,* we mention the distinction conferred on **Dr. Priyanca Mathur** as **Distinguished Schomberg Fellow** at **Ramapo College** in New Jersey, USA.

We are also proud to inform our readers that our Branch Secretary and Editor of this Newsletter, **Dr. D. Jeevan Kumar** has been appointed as **Adjunct Faculty** at **Kristu Jayanti College**, Bengaluru.

In our section on Branch Members' writings in the Media, we carry the link to an article by **Dr. A. Ravindra** which appeared in *Deccan Herald* recently.

We end the issue with our columns on *Feedback* and *Food for Thought*.

I wish to add a disclaimer here that the views expressed by the contributors in this issue 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.
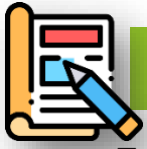
Ethics for Administrators

V. Balasubramanian, IAS (Retd.)
Former Additional Chief Secretary
Government of Karnataka

With the fall from grace of the four Estates of State namely, the Political Leadership, Bureaucracy, the Judiciary and also the Media, the topic of '*Ethics for Administrators'* may appear to be an oxymoron—a contradiction in terms. But it should not be so because such bottomless fall will lead to a Failed State as we witness in Somalia, Yemen, Afghanistan, many African countries and creeping even in India's neighbours such as Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Myanmar. After World War II when the British left their colonies in late 1940's, India, Pakistan (which included the present Bangladesh), Sri Lanka and Myanmar had the same civil service intact as was under the colonial regime in terms of method of selection, training, service conditions, powers and responsibility. But only India continued with the same system with the renamed Indian Administrative Service, Indian Police Service, etc., while the other countries soon emasculated their civil services. It should be realized that with all the institutions in India being criticized for corruption, the Union Public Service Commission, which is the primary recruiting agency for the higher civil services and given an independent position under the Constitution, remains the only institution against which no allegation of corruption has been made, while that is not the case with other institutions including the Judiciary since 1951. Currently, about 9 lakh graduates write the Civil Service Preliminary Examination from whom about 11,000 qualify for writing the Mains examination from whom about 2,000 are called for interview from whom about 1,000 are selected for the All-India Services of whom about 180 are appointed to the Indian Administrative Service, and the rest for other services.

The AIS are protected under Article 311 of the Constitution from arbitrary disciplinary action by the State Governments. They can be removed from service only by the Union Government after the recommendation by the UPSC. The salary of AIS was also increased after 2019 significantly and the highest pay of the Cabinet Secretary is Rs.2.5 lakhs per month and that of the Secretary to Government of India is Rs.2.25 lakhs. The starting salary of the AIS officers now is Rs.51,000 and with all other allowances will be around Rs.70,000. These are comparable with the middle level firms in the private corporate sector. The pay increases came after the Chief Executive of Singapore once told the Indian Prime Minister, "*If you pay peanuts, you will get monkeys!*" Coupled with the employment security, health coverage and the prestige attached, the AIS officers have no need to be corrupt. All their needs can be met from their salary income and only greed can explain the corruption.

Following the Greek philosophic tradition of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics, the 13th century religious thinker, Saint Thomas Aquinas prescribed Natural Law namely, *"The light of reason is placed by Nature (and thus by God) in every man to guide him in his acts. Therefore, human beings, alone among God's creatures, use reason to lead their lives. This is Natural Law".* He concluded that man-

made law is only valid if it conforms to Natural Law. An ethical administrator should therefore follow the Natural Law to dispense justice and not quote the letter of man-made law if it militates against natural law and justice. One can also put this principle into simple terms: *If an action is morally right, it does not matter it is legally wrong; per contra, if it is morally wrong, it does not help that it is legally right.* This was also the principle enunciated in the Nuremberg Trial, 1945, when the leading top Nazi leaders who were responsible for the holocaust in which six million Jews were exterminated, had to justify their acts. Their defence that they were soldiers who were carrying out the written orders of the Head of State, Chancellor Adolf Hitler was rejected because they violated Natural Law and were sentenced to death or life imprisonment.

The earliest philosophical doctrine on human behaviour coming from the time of Aristotle is *Tabula Rasa,* which in Latin means "*Clean Table*", that is, when we are born, we are in a state of Clean Slate, and nothing is written on the mind. All knowledge, all behaviour, all action is therefore *acquired* after birth. Its more methodical formulation is attributed to the English Philosopher John Locke. Simply put, it would mean, everything is 'Nurture and not Nature'. *No one is born anything, everyone becomes.* Except for certain hereditary diseases encoded in genes, everything else is acquired. So a corrupt person is corrupt because of his upbringing, his early deprivations and to a significant extent because of the lack of ethical values he inculcates by imitation, teaching, compulsion, discipline. Therefore, ethical behaviour is a matter of an administrator's own choice.

It is not as if the life of unethical administrators is pleasant and to be envied. One actual instance is that of an officer who was an 'Emperor' of corruption in Karnataka who not only became the head of the civil service but also, after retirement, became an MLA and a Cabinet Minister! But his son demanded partition of properties before the officer's retirement because, he said, one did not know what will happen to the properties when the anti-corruption cases against him ended! One can imagine the family life of officers who do not follow the 'Examined and Considered Life' of an ethical administrator. The world of these corrupt officers is very small. They live the life of the well-frog in dark waters with slimy, creepy, cruddy creatures for company and have no idea of the wide sky, bright sun and blue waters outside their limited vision. The only book they can ever read is their bank pass-book and the solitary card they can play in life is their credit card. They are ignorant of the fulfilled, examined life of the virtuous. They may even be happy. If ignorance is bliss, it is folly to be wise.

Honesty is a virtue by itself regardless of external benefits. Henry David Thoreau's formula for Happiness where H is Happiness, MC is Material Comforts and D is Desire.

$$H = MC \div D$$

It all goes back to John Stuart Mill's Qualitative Utilitarianism. It was Mill, the 19th century British Utilitarian-Liberal Philosopher who said, *"It is better to be a man dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates unhappy than a fool happy. And if the fool, or the pig, are of a different opinion, it is because they only know their own side of the question."* Mill, incidentally, joined as a Civil Servant in the British East India Company in 1823 at the age of seventeen and worked there till 1858 when it was abolished. Till one becomes a handful of ashes, one should walk the path of virtue. After all, All Paths of Wealth lead but to the Grave. One should be worthy of suffering. *The journey is the joy*.

*Synopsis of talk delivered by **Mr. V. Balasubramanian**, IAS (Retd.) at the **Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussourie.** He addressed 132 IAS trainees on the topic, "Ethics for Administrators" recently.*

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 Lead Feature

Rural Public Libraries becoming Knowledge Centres

Senior IAS officer and Additional Chief Secretary, Panchayati Raj, Smt. Uma Mahadevan Dasgupta spoke passionately about the 'Oduva Belaku' (The Light of Reading) movement in Karnataka.

Source: **The New Sunday Express**, dt. 19th March 2023

Uma Mahadevan Dasgupta, IAS

One of the main reasons why children from rural backgrounds are unable to compete with their colleagues from urban areas is the lack of similar exposure to books, learning and community spaces.

Senior IAS officer and Additional Chief Secretary, Panchayati Raj, Karnataka, **Smt. Uma Mahadevan Dasgupta,** along with her team of officers and with the help of Panchayats, has brought a sea change in rural literacy in Karnataka by opening rural libraries for children and empowering them with books, computers and even the smart speaker, *Alexa*, in some Panchayats.

Mahadevan spoke passionately about the '***Oduva Belaku'*** (The Light of Reading) movement in Karnataka, which was inaugurated during the first Covid-19 pandemic year in 2020, among other important issues, while interacting with the editors and staff of **The New Sunday Express.**

How has 'Oduva Belaku' shaped up since its inception?

We know the importance of early literacy and how it helps shape a child's life and perspective. '*Oduva Belaku'* was launched across Karnataka in November 2020 during the Covid pandemic when schools were closed. It was a difficult time with educational institutions closed because of the lockdown. We decided that all the 5,600 rural libraries must have children's sections to help children stay connected to reading and learning by building a library culture within communities.

To take this forward, we launched '*Pustaka Jolige'* programme to collect donated books from Bengaluru, other districts and villages. This became a state-wide movement with individuals, NGOs like the Azim Premji Foundation, Sikshana Foundation, Pratham Books, Adhyayan, Concerned for Working Children, Bharathiya Gnana Vignana Samithi, India Literacy Project, Yuva Chintana Foundation, corporates like Dell Technologies, and many more, partnering with us.

Under the '*Pustaka Jolige*' programme, we collected more than one million books. Recently, two ex-servicemen from Belagavi and a late freedom fighter's family in Dakshina Kannada district donated books to the libraries.

How has 'Oduva Belaku' helped turn rural libraries into community spaces for learning and positive interactions?

In Karnataka, with around 3.3 million children aged between six and 18 from rural areas enrolling free of charge, our 5,600 rural public libraries in the state are on the way to becoming knowledge centres. This is extremely heartening and goes to prove that there's an immense hunger for learning among our children. What they need is equal opportunity and support.

Giving a child a library card is one step forward in the direction. Our libraries are now open for six hours a day, even on weekends. A child is entitled to borrow one book at a time and can take it home. His or her parents and grandparents may not be literate but the child can read the book to them and bring them to the library. Close to 4,000 libraries have computers and internet connectivity, where children get to navigate the Internet.

These libraries are inclusive spaces and cater to children with disabilities so that they can also learn and make use of the facilities. Last year with the 44th Chess Olympiad in Chennai, we got some wooden chess boards in rural libraries. Playing chess hones a child's thinking and strategy-building abilities. Besides children, other community stakeholders like ASHA workers and constables play chess in the libraries during their break.

The rural libraries are now functioning as decentralised learning hubs. In many Panchayats, after the official closing hour of the libraries, they have given permission to use the terrace for learning, art and craft and community interaction. This also is an indicator of decentralisation of power for which Karnataka has been a pioneer state, starting with the 73rd Amendment.

How is the solid waste management (SWM) initiative shaping up in the Panchayats?

SWM has picked up pace in Panchayats and it is very heartening to see women's self-help groups (SHGs) taking the lead. They are engaged as partners by their local Gram Panchayats to carry out SWM duties, like daily waste collection, waste segregation, *Swaccha Vahini* driving and so on. Around 12,000 women are trained in SWM and 1,200 women are driving *Swachh Vahinis*. They themselves came forward and are being supported by their families. To see women getting into public spaces is a visible sign of their empowerment.

What are the challenges faced by the government in ensuring proper implementation of schemes at the ground level?

Communication or outreach from the government's end continues to need strengthening; it is to be ensured that a government order sent across to different Taluk and Zilla Panchayats is explained to the people. The administrative language of an order has to be translated by a lay person to ensure its proper implementation. Accessibility is another barrier. Rules and regulations or government orders need to be made accessible online and elsewhere to ensure any person can read and follow them.

Was it difficult to manage the Covid situation across Gram Panchayats? How did the government handle the situation?

During the first wave of Covid, uncertainty and anxiety prevailed among people. We tried to disseminate information to Gram Panchayat leaders through online meetings and even *YouTube*. The information given by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the State Health Department was shared and further translated for people to make them understand the situation better.

The PowerPoint Presentation (PPT) depiction of the Corona virus was made into a *rangoli*, wall paintings, and other traditional folk art as well by the Gram Panchayats. *Swach Vahinis* and loudspeakers were used across areas to provide information to people and ensure that Covid protocols were followed.

Gram Panchayat Task Forces were set up during Covid time including frontline workers, Anganwadi workers and ASHAs, who organised village-level committee meetings to educate people about following Covid Appropriate Behaviour (CAB). Schools were turned into Covid care and isolation centres to isolate symptomatic patients.

Has increased rural literacy rate improved women's representation in Gram Panchayats?

The profile of Panchayat members has considerably changed in Karnataka. Reservation for women was 33 per cent earlier and was increased to 50 per cent a few years ago. Women are sometimes proxied by men, not only because of illiteracy but largely because of patriarchy. Over the years, the shift is seen, wherein even semi-literate women are elected, who showcase good leadership skills.

Training programmes have also been organised and women are being called upfront, especially focussing on improving the social infrastructure across villages.

Despite several efforts from the government, why are child marriages still prevalent in Karnataka?

Karnataka is one of the states with a higher percentage of child marriage cases, though it has relatively come down now. According to the NFHS-3, it was around 40 per cent. It came down to around 20 per cent in NFHS-4. Karnataka has also been one of the states where the Devadasi system has been traditionally practised.

The primary reason for both is gender discrimination. Amendments have been brought to the Prevention of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), removing loopholes that allowed child marriages to be officiated. Encouraging education for girl children is the most important way through which this practice can be stopped.

Several women-oriented programmes have been initiated to uplift the status of women in society. Around 58,000 officers in Karnataka have been notified as Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPO) to ensure that authorities are informed in cases of child marriage.

How has technology aided governance in rural areas? What are the plans for digitising the Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Department's portals?

Several e-governance solutions have been developed at the RD&PR (Rural Development & Panchayat Raj) Department. Karnataka has been a pioneer in using rural e-governance solutions. An accounting software -- *Panchtantra* -- is being used for some time now.

A new version of this digital platform — *Panchatantra 2.0* — has also been recently started to provide end-to-end solutions to Gram Panchayats for monitoring and managing the works and making digital payments as well. These portals will also help ensure committee-level meetings are being held regularly and members are participating.

Real-time data will be shared on the portals which will help the public with information about Panchayat meetings. Another portal -- *PanchMitra* -- is available where these meeting decisions, budgets etc can be accessed online later.

Is untouchability still prevalent in the state? What measures are being taken to end it?

The Panchayats have a responsibility to prevent any exploitation or discrimination among people. Even during the pandemic, they ensured that people were not ill-treated

while being provided treatment or during isolation. Panchayats also spend 25 per cent of their funds towards SC/ST welfare. Further, people are being sensitised towards practising gender and social equity in the villages.

Any suggestions given by Panchayat members that have been noteworthy to be applied in other areas as well?

One of the Panchayat presidents from Udupi was working on SWM. He addressed the problem of women being unable to travel to District Training Centres, which were far away. To reduce the travel time for women, centres were set up in nearby areas to make sure that they did not miss their training.

Village tourism is now picking up in Karnataka. Are steps being taken to increase tourism scope in rural parts?

Village tourism is of very low-intensity and environment-friendly. Now it is picking up with the help of women SHGs and the state has also taken pilot initiatives in Ramanagara and now in Kolar, to promote camps involving rock climbing and journey of silk production as activities to attract tourists. Women in these areas volunteer to make people participate in such activities and further educate them on the different stages of silk production. In the upcoming months, the department also plans to extend such services to people in other districts as well.

What motivated you to enter the Civil Services?

My parents urged me to pursue Civil Services. In my family, nobody before me or after I joined the IAS, has joined the Civil Services. It has been a journey of 30 years and the motivating factor has been to help bring societal change. We work towards designing policy interventions and impacting large groups of people in rural areas. I am happy to say that with time, women's representation (in civil services) has also significantly improved.

Audit Matters

Performance Audit of the Functioning of Kalyan Karnataka Development Board by the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India
(Report No.10 of 2022)

Thayyil Sethumadhavan, IAAS (Rtd.)
Formerly Principal Accountant-General, Madhya Pradesh

"The core function of the Board towards redressal of regional disparities and ensuring balanced regional development was not discharged by the Board during the entire nine years of its existence".
CAG

Introduction

How do we reckon a Development Board that decides to construct a public entertainment facility for Rs.9.5 crores in 2014-15; but abandons it after spending Rs.5.67 crores and the work partly completed? Or constructs a Training Centre (2018-19) at a cost of Rs.5.02 crores, but lets it remain idle ever since? CAG's Performance Audit Report on Kalyan Karnataka Development Board (KKDB) presented to the State Assembly on 23 February,2022 is replete with incidents of wastages of public money and is a cursor to how a development agency *should not be* functioning.

An idea of the KKDB's functional efficiency could be gauged from the following: its

meetings were infrequent; it never prepared annual budgets and annual accounts, and was never subjected to commercial audit. It also failed to submit Annual Reports to the State Assembly as envisaged in Art.371-J of the Constitution which mandated its creation.

Background of The Development Board

KKDB was established in terms of Article 371-J of the Constitution of India inserted through the 98th Constitutional Amendment in January, 2013 granting Special Status to the KK Region comprising Kalaburgi, Bidar, Raichur, Koppal, Yadagiri and Ballari Districts. This followed the Hyderabad Karnataka Area Development Act, 1991 which had initially provided for the establishment of a Regional Development Board to hasten the pace of development of the Area and to bring it on par with other areas of the State. A High-Power Committee for redressal of regional imbalance, known as Nanjundappa Committee (April, 2000) had identified that out of 175 Taluks in the States at that time, 39 Taluks were "Most Backward", of which 21 belonged to the KK Region. The Government initiated a Special Development Plan to address the backwardness of these Taluks. The KKDB was required to ascertain the inter-se levels of development in different sectors of economy with reference to appropriate indicators and contribute to policy formulation aimed at accelerating the pace of development in the Region and redress regional disparities while ensuring balanced development. The Performance Audit of CAG has analyzed the activities and outputs of the Board since its inception and concludes laconically that the objectives of the Constitutional Amendment remain largely unmet.

Absence of Database

The first task of the Board was to ascertain the relative levels of development in various sectors of the economy with reference to appropriate indicators; but this was never attempted. In the absence of data and analysis, the Board could not articulate an appropriate strategic direction by evolving Long Term plans for addressing the problems of the Region. Also, its Annual Plans were delayed every year because its planning process itself started only after allocation of budgets by the Government. Added to it, the plans were bereft of targets and outcomes to be achieved. Detailed sector- wise analysis by Performance Auditors establish that the objectives of the 98th Amendment largely remain unfulfilled and the Board failed to identify specific tasks for determination of backlogs and requisition budgetary allocations for the redressal of disparity of the Region, ensure creation of posts to fill in shortfalls in public employment and establishment of institutions necessary for accelerated development.

The PA Report brings out that the KK Region continues to be backward in terms of various development indicators such as NITI Aayog Indices, Multidimensional Poverty Indices etc. and the socio-economic indicators of the Region continue to be lower as compared to rest of the State even after 10 years of the Constitutional Amendment, reflecting the abysmal performance of the Development Board. In the absence of data, estimation of the outcome of its activities towards minimizing the regional disparity was not feasible and the Board was not able to demonstrate the effectiveness of its operations in measurable terms. Unfortunately, the Board is clueless when it comes to formalizing an indicator framework suitable for the Region and is yet to fix achievable targets and goals for

ensuring socio-economic progress of the Region. It must be noted that Raichur and Yadagiri were identified under the **Aspirational Districts Program** of NITI Aayog, but the Board is yet to collect related data for these Districts also. The National Multidimensional Poverty Index (MDPI) data prepared by the NITI Aayog in 2020-21 showed that the least performing districts in the State were from the KK Region and that the slower growth-rate of the Per Capita Income levels (PCI) of the 6 Districts in the Region led to increased divergence with State PCI. While the average Per Capita Income level of the Region was 61 percent of the State Average in 2013, it has fallen to 54.5 percent in 2019-20.

Growth Strategy Not Developed

Despite the above, CAG points out, the State Government is yet to develop a suitable strategy for achievement of Sustainable Development Growth (SDG) in KKR nor has been making use of the National SDG Indicator Framework for monitoring and accelerating the march towards SDG Goals in the Region. The Region is rich in mineral resources; but plans for sustainable utilization of minerals are wanting. *On the other hand, the CAG's auditors observed unauthorized extraction of valuable resources by contractors.* CAG recommends natural resources accounting (for which it has issued guidelines separately) and monitoring. Other areas requiring attention are Healthcare (Ante-natal care, Anaemia of women and children, Promoting Institutional births, Under-5 Mortality etc.,) and Education. The Region ranks below other Districts in terms of Accredited Educational Institutions, literacy of women, etc. Though 44 Government Departments had identified about 35,000 posts to be filled in through direct recruitment as part of the levelling up exercise, only 46 percent of them have been filled. When the auditors pointed

out the feasibility and need to assess the commercial and tourism potential of the Region and prepare suitable strategic development plans, the Board confirmed that they were under preparation.

Functioning of the Board

Another observation in the Audit Report pertains to non-establishment of various Apex Level Committees specified for assisting the Board, including an Advisory Council to prepare Annual Development Plans, Implementation Committee for monitoring works and Expert Committee for Quality Assurance etc. There was also omission to nominate members of the Board for about 3 years. Though the Board had forwarded its Finance Regulations, Transaction of Business Rules, Accounts Manual etc. for approval of the Government, they are pending approval since long.

Infrastructure Development

An appreciable thing about the working of the Board is that it has done considerable work for road connectivity in the Region. In fact, 56 per cent out of its total investments from 2013 onwards (even at the cost of other sectors), was for Road Connectivity, though a comprehensive plan to support investment priorities in the area is yet to be drafted. A study by ISRO, quoted in the Report, points out that the road network in KKR improved considerably during the period 2015 to 2020 compared to other Districts. The Audit Report brings out the following observations, inter alia, on the works carried out by the Board:

→ During 2013-14 to 2021-22, the Board completed 19,038 of the 28,038 works approved (68%) and cancelled 373 projects while 2,352 are yet to begin.

→ Auditors noticed persistent delays in completion of works; (only 36 out of 601

works/ 6 per cent) were on time. Delays ranged from 1 to 6 years.

→ In 2014-15, the Board approved 4 different works at Rajiv Gandhi Theme Park in Kalaburgi and another work at Kotnoor D Park at an estimated cost of Rs.9.52 crores and released Rs.5.67 crores to Nirmiti Kendra as Implementation Agency. In April, 2022, all works were abandoned after incurring Rs.5.60 crores. Joint inspection of auditors with Board officials revealed that work had reached roof level. Reasons for abandoning the work at that stage is not available in the Report.

→ Suvarna Karnataka Bhavan at Sedan Taluk constructed at a cost of Rs.2.80 crores remain unused. Another Shopping Complex constructed at a cost of Rs.1.97 crores at Chindoli remains unused since 2015-16.

→ A High-Tech Textile Training Centre in Yadagiri constructed at a cost of Rs. 5.05 crores remains idle since 2018-19.

→ Work of construction of road from Udanoor to Minajagi for 8.8 kms awarded to PRED in 2015-16 under Macro Projects included a stretch of 2.8 kms already said to have been executed by PRED under another scheme at a cost of Rs.1.28 crores giving undue benefit to the contractor.

→ Work for renovation of a PHC at Chittapur Taluk at a cost of Rs.30 lakhs remained incomplete and the PHC continues to work in an adjacent building due to the unfinished work.

→ Though Rs.30 lakhs was released for construction of 4 toilet blocks in a school in Deodurga Town, only 2 were actually made.

  (*The above is only illustrative*).

Financial Management

Audit has concluded that the financial management of the Board is deficient. As mentioned earlier, the Board does not prepare annual estimates of income and expenditure and annual statements of accounts. No commercial audit has ever been carried out. The system of monitoring the utilization of the advances given to Implementing Agencies is inadequate and the interest accrued on such advances were not accounted for. There were delays in settlements of contractors' bills. The Board did not claim Income Tax refund of Rs.4.4 crores due to it from TDS payments. There was no system of inventory accounting of the assets created out of its funds.

An amount of Rs.9.97 crores paid to create a Project Support Office to provide support services to the Board on all on-going activities including development plans did not yield the expected benefits and was of doubtful nature. Finally, the Board forfeited Rs. 387.5 crores of assistance from the State Government due to non-utilization of funds released earlier.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Since the Board did not meet periodically, the level of monitoring of its activities at the apex level was inadequate. The Board's meetings were also not held regularly for continuity. Appreciably, the Board has developed a software (HYKASOFT) to monitor its projects and works, but auditors have brought out several gaps which need to be plugged. The Board has appointed two CAs for conducting Internal Audit, but is yet to put in place regular Commercial and Social Audits.

Under Art. 371-J, the Board has to submit Annual Reports to the State Legislature; but this has never been done.

Conclusion

The Performance Audit Report of the CAG is very comprehensive and brings out what ails the KKDB and how it impacts the objective of speeding up development of the backward KK Region. Unfortunately, the unremarkable performance of the Development Board does not appear to have attracted the required attention of policy makers and people's representatives. We can only hope that this valuable Audit Report does not gather dust in the face of the melee of approaching general election, but stimulates precipitate actions for improved performance of the Board.

Communication Pulse - Probe, Reflect, Act

## Data Science in Governance - A Tool

Annapoorna Ravichander
Executive Director
Public Affairs Foundation (PAF)

Introduction

In an age where science and technology have become an integral part of everyday life, Data Science and Data Analytics has also come to the forefront, especially in the area of governance. Data Analytics and Data Science helps in not only mining useful information from humungous data available, but also helps in improving government decision making activities. As a government officer, it becomes important to understand the use of data and see the importance for providing insights in making data-driven decisions. In short, Data Analytics is the science of analyzing raw data in order to arrive at a conclusion based on the information. It also helps optimize performance through the insights it presents.
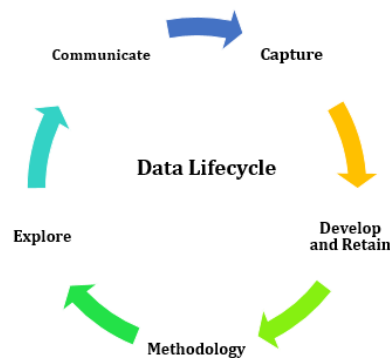
Importance of Data Science

Data Science is important since it answers some basic questions which are relevant. In addition, it also:
- Supports successful policy decisions and to a large extent enactment of a policy
- Understands and identifies the needs of the community
- Identifies gaps/lacunae for better implementation of policies
- Helps in prioritising important aspects in policy making process.

Data Science also becomes a tool for validation to create informed policy decisions. Typically, this leads to accuracy and also becomes a centralised system for easy access. All sectors are assured of empowerment by digital growth and use of

technologies. This becomes an important factor since, a move towards digital technologies presents better opportunities.

Advantages

Understanding and using Data Analytics effectively has the following benefits:

- Defines government actions by identifying outliers of exclusion
- Constructs increased assured decisions
- Identifies barriers and challenges prior to making a policy decision
- Correlates between different data points to find a pattern
- Helps in drawing insights and conclusions.

Context

Several studies have shown that Data Analytics have become game changers to improve decision making activities in the government. Government policies are impacted to a great extent by using Data Science to the maximum, where gaps and similarities in implementation are addressed, and most important, the identified audience benefit from policies and programmes. In short, Data Science and Analytics enables curating efficient solutions for users and beneficiaries.

Several initiatives launched by government gain a lot from use of Data Science and Analytics. For example, education, agriculture, health, and some of the government services become more useful and relevant.

Increases Efficiency

The efficiency of a programme is typically impacted by the data analysed. A good example for this would be during the time of the pandemic (when it shook all of us the first time), the Government relied largely on Data Science. They identified the intensity of the pandemic in different pockets and developed the red, green and amber zones for handing the situation better and efficiently. This created less confusion and largely helped control the situation. The creation of the Co-WIN platform is a good example.

Distribution of Resource

Data collection and data analytics helps in bringing in transparency, which in turn helps a government increase resource efficiency. For example, if data is collected to identify Public Health Centres in Karnataka and identify the types of illness mapped to the availability of concerned doctors and medicine, the data analysed will help the Government to optimise human resources and allocations of medicines, based on the analysis.

Plan for Future Projects

One of the biggest challenges faced by the Government is in the areas of education, poverty, health, nutrition and infrastructure, to name a few. However, Data Analytics can become a game changer if used well. For example, useful insights and knowledge retrieved from the data gathered can help in improving the government decision-making process for projects that are planned.

What You Should Know as a Government Officer

In a general sense many people often think Data Analytics /Data Science is equivalent to rocket science, but it is not. A simple and logical understanding of a data lifecycle will help you in using it efficiently. So here is the lifecycle:

- Capture - raw data (structured and unstructured data)
- Develop and Retain - clean, organise and integrate
- Method - Observe similarities and regulate patterns
- Explore - Conduct the following analyses - statistical, predictive and regression analyses
- Communicate - develop reports, charts, data visualisation to include insights.

Conclusion

If used well and intelligently, Data Science can prove to be a boon. New insights and acumen always help in growth and improvement in policy-making decisions. Data Science is about data-driven decision-making and service delivery. From a policy making perspective, Data Science and Data Analytics can increase economy and set new standards for decision-making.

Thus, Data Analytics can be used to identify challenges/disasters in advance and help develop a strategic approach to address the same.

……………………………………………………

Gender Matters

Intersectionality in Gender Mainstreaming:

An Inclusive Tool for Pluralism[1]

Debangana Chatterjee
Assistant Professor, Centre for Research in Social Sciences and Education (CeRSSE), JAIN (Deemed-to-be University), Bengaluru

Gender mainstreaming, which gained traction particularly in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, indicates the integration of gender concerns into the mainframe of policymaking. While this policy approach has had a long history encapsulating the liberal notions of gender equality based on the universal rights approach, the evolving times demand inclusivity. It is to say that the concept of gender mainstreaming merely seeking equality for women is reductive in nature due to the decontextualized and siloed understanding of the policy issue areas. Hence, commitment to gendered needs requires substantial engagement with the differential requirements in an intersectional manner. Inclusivity, closely tied to the concept of fluid identity, in policymaking, aims at ensuring equitable access to opportunities and availability of resources for the marginalized and persons discriminated against. While policy frameworks themselves are not binding in nature, policy connotations are integrally connected to the framing of the policy language with a gender-sensitized approach.

Two gender-related concerns of policy-making should be specifically looked into, in this regard: First, the gendered construction of the policy language highlights how the words and tonality, used for policy construction, tend to homogenize and condone intersectionality. Second, policy language seeks to ensure inclusivity and pluralism through intersectional gender mainstreaming. This discourse of gender mainstreaming can be mapped vis-à-vis intersectionality and inclusivity in the Indian context.

The questions about the differential needs of women, therefore, would require to be

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[1] *This is an excerpt from a chapter originally published in an edited volume titled Discovering New India, edited by Dr. A. Ravindra and Dr. Priyanca Mathur and published by Jain University Press in September 2022.*

addressed. In the realm of the rights policy, the advocates of human rights argue that a woman by virtue of her being a human is entitled to the rights bestowed on human beings in general. Yet, human rights can at times be seen as being in conflict with women's rights where the 'person' entitled to such rights is often presumed to be a man. To illustrate further, if we consider *leisure* as a part of human rights the definition of *leisure* for both men and women would be drastically different pertaining to their different demands. If *'leisure'* is to be defined as a respite from paid work, women's unpaid domestic work goes completely unrecognised. Feminists consider women's needs as being a neglected global agenda and therefore, seek to transform the policy paradigms by making these adapt to women's issues and take into account women's lives and experiences.

While prima facie 'equality' is welcomed and appreciated as a means to policy inclusion, the homogenizing tendencies of equality brushing off the contextual differences seek critical attention. While equality hints at 'sameness' as a policy approach, equity concerns itself with the acknowledgement of substantive differences between the gendered construction of categories like men and women based on needs and interests. Equality, in this regard, may also be perceived as universalistic in nature playing along the lines of Western hegemonic interests. The liberal feminist actors and international organizations reiterate the need to push for 'equality' as a fundamental principle for gender justice: "[T]he term 'equity' . . . is conditioned by subjective criteria, [and therefore] cannot become a substitute for the fundamental legal principle of equality . . ." (UN, 2000:5). This discourse problematises "...any dilution of equal treatment of women and men on grounds of culture" (Rai 2002:17).

A few Indian policy areas vis-à-vis gender concerns, though not exhaustive, may be put forward in order to substantiate the argument in favour of intersectionality in gender mainstreaming. The Women's Reservation Act, also known as the 108th Constitutional Amendment Bill, 2008, is a failed attempt at reserving seats for women in the Indian Parliament. The Bill, on the one hand, speaks of a blanket reservation of 33 per cent seats in all the legislatures for women, without ensuring that the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) are adequately represented among the women. On the other hand, it introduces reservation of SC and ST women within the 22 per cent reserved seats for SCs and STs, further breaking the ambit of marginalised reservation. In fact, the opposers of the Bill also claimed to defend the caste and religious interests, particularly of the OBCs and Muslims. They demanded 'quota within quota' to harp upon the fact that marginalised women could not be represented by Hindu upper-caste women. Representative institutions of a liberal democracy like that of India which are meant to ensure increased political activity through citizen participation and gender, indeed, is an integral component of it. But, in an unequal society like that of India, a blanket categorisation of women may be detrimental and even, antithetical to the larger gendered interests of equity. Thus, in order to ensure equitable political representation taking into consideration structural inequalities may be key to the process of democratisation.

The other example encapsulates the treatment of the Justice Verma Committee's recommendations on redefining '*rape*' from a gender-neutral perspective. Formulated in the aftermath of the December 2012 gangrape in New Delhi, the three-member Justice Verma Committee led by the former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, J.S. Verma, made policy recommendations for

amending the Criminal Law against sexual assault on women. The recommendations include expanding the scope of rape to any act of non-consensual sexual penetration. These recommendations are particularly important with regard to its inclusive approach and the usage of a gender-fluid language. Thus, the mere recognition of a female body in the policy dictum may not be enough to highlight the marginalisation faced by other sexual minorities which include the whole ambit of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual and more (LGBTQIA+). Yet, the amendment to the section followed by these recommendations only accepts this recommendation partially. Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), as of now, defines 'rape' explicitly as an act perpetrated by men on women as it outlines specific circumstances under which "A man is said to commit 'rape'" in case of "sexual intercourse with a woman". Thus, despite attempts, the IPC definition still revolves around the binary of men and women - riddled with the non-recognition of 'other' genders in the policy framework.

Therefore, the question remains how does this Gender Mainstreaming ensure taking into account the multiple levels of marginalisation emanating from factors like class, caste, race, ethnicity etc. within the category of women? The answer to this question lies in conceptualising Gender Mainstreaming along the lines of intersectionality working as a complex cobweb of power. This makes one ponder if 'women' at all can be treated as a homogenous category in policy-making. For example, treating an African-American woman and a white woman demands a nuanced policy understanding to address the double marginalisation that the black woman may be facing, both because of her gender as well as her skin colour. At the same time, policy-making requires being mindful of the positional hierarchy between a white woman and a black man. The same example may be conceptualised from a caste perspective in the Indian context. It seeks the recognition of caste as not just a retrograde past but an oppressive past reproduced as forms of inequality in modern society. Thus, it requires an integration of the questions of caste with those of class and gender by recognising differences, power and connections of class, caste and community transforming subjectivities, politics and pedagogies.
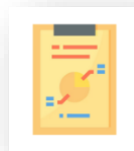
Report

Launch of *Raitha Sahayak* App

Deepak Srinivasa

The **Centre for Sustainable Development** and *EcoChoice Naturals* launched the *Raitha Sahayak* App on 24th March 2023 at the Indian Institute of World Culture, Bengaluru. The event was chaired by **Dr. A. Ravindra,** IAS (Retd.), former Chief Secretary, Government of Karnataka and the current Chairman of the Centre for Sustainable Development.

The *Raitha Sahayak* App was formally launched by **Dr. A. Ravindra** and was demonstrated live by the team from EcoChoice.

The *Raitha Sahayak* App is powered by Artificial Intelligence and will provide wider markets and transparency to farmers as well as buyers. The App aims to make agriculture a profitable venture and deliver quality

products on time by using technology, thus empowering the farmers.

In his remarks, **Dr. A. Ravindra** congratulated *EcoChoice* for their effort. He suggested incuding other aspects like educating farmers about growing right crops and judiciouis use of fertilizer and pesticide. This would make the App more integrated and practical.

Dr. Srinivas, Founder, *EcoChoice* welcomed the guests. Those present included **Sri B. Lokesh,** agri-entrepreneur and founder Chairman, Vande Bharatham Foundation; **Sri C.M. Patil**, CEO, Krishi Kalpa; and **Sri Lakshmikant**, Dept. of Agriculture, GoK. The Guest of Honour was **Dr. S.V. Suresh**, Vice-Chancellor, University of Agricultural Sciences, Bengaluru

Book Review

Glimpses of the Steel Frame

T. Ramakrishnan

*Mr. V. Balasubramanian's memoir, 'Fall from Grace' was reviewed in **The Hindu** dt. 17th March 2023* by T. Ramakarishnan

Writing a memoir is a temptation not many can resist, particularly politicians and civil servants with eventful careers. However, what readers look forward to in such accounts is whether they have any lessons to offer from their time in office. The memoirs of V. Balasubramanian, an officer of the 1965 batch of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) belonging to the Karnataka cadre, do not disappoint on this count.

Be it usage of a provision in the Police Act regarding externment or the issue of conflict between the Chief Secretary and the Chief Minister's Office or the role of corruption in

public life, the author touches upon such subjects with ease and insight.

Calling himself a 'rebel officer', the octogenarian, with a track record of having an uncommon way of handling things, held key positions in the Karnataka government. He was Secretary to Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde, Deputy Commissioner/ District Magistrate of three districts, and had two stints in the silk sector, an important area for Karnataka. Post-retirement, two assignments — Adviser to the Joint Legislature Committee (2005-07) and later, Chairman of the Task Force (2009-11), both dealing with the subject of land grabbing — gave him greater prominence.

On the Job

His accounts of the stringent action pursued by him against one landlord of Devanahalli taluk who, along with his sons, had cut off the left thumbs of petitioners who were Scheduled Caste, and owners of cinema halls of Bengaluru show the difference a public-spirited civil servant can make in society. His approach as Secretary to the Chief Minister underscores that despite being in proximity to the most powerful person in the State, he honoured rules of the game. In fact, his

detailed notes on the selection of his successor reveals his respect for established institutions such as the office of Chief Secretary — he explained to Hegde the rationale behind the Karnataka tradition of choosing a comparatively junior person as the CM's Secretary.

Though laced with sarcasm, he also shows that he has a great sense of humour. While he liberally mentions names of members of the IAS fraternity for, what he considers, their accomplishments, he does not follow the same rule when it comes, in his assessment, to instances of corruption or unscrupulousness. This is inexplicable, as he has no hesitation in identifying politicians or contractors. For example, he describes the chief ministership of S. Bangarappa (1990-92) as one that launched "*the golden age of corruption*" but does not name the then Chief Secretary in the Classik Computer scam, despite recalling how Bangarappa and his Chief Secretary had indulged in, according to Mr. Balasubramanian, *"the most blatant case of robbing the state exchequer."* [Though the CBI charge-sheeted the former Chief Minister and the Chief Secretary J. Alexander in the case, they were later acquitted].

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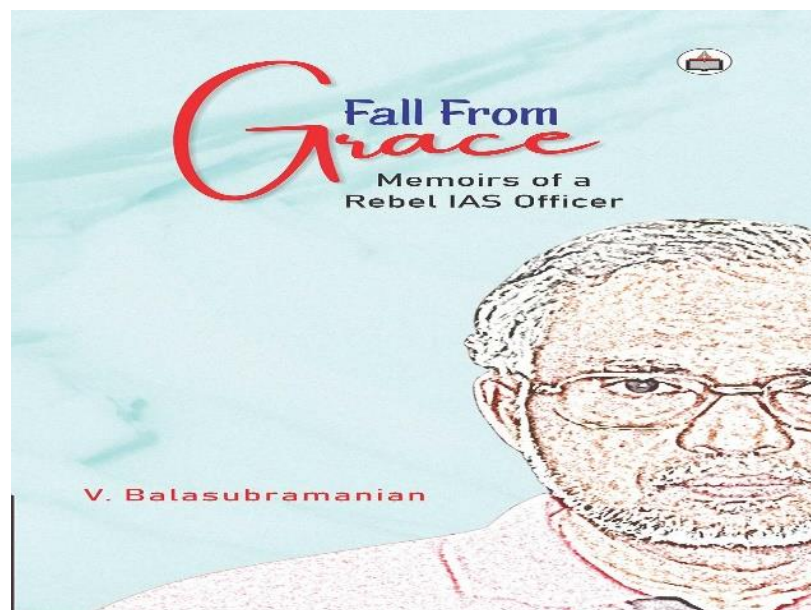
Despite being highly opinionated, the author writes with objectivity, highlighting the positive traits of people he disagreed with. His narration of how former Chief Ministers M. Veerendra Patil and D. Devaraj Urs handled a number of issues concerning governance enhances only admiration for past leaders. He has referred to the issue of stable regimes in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, but political stability does not necessarily guarantee a better quality of governance.

The book, however, would have been far more readable had its size been briefer, accompanied by an index.

Fall from Grace: Memoirs of a Rebel IAS Officer; **V. Balasubramanian, Authorspress, ₹595.**

Karnataka News

Three years after first COVID-19 case hit State, focus shifts to preparedness for future pandemics

Afshan Yasmeen
BENGALURU

Three years after COVID-19 hit Karnataka on March 8, 2020, the focus is now on preparedness for future pandemics. The State is working on setting up a Health Emergency Operation Centre (HEOC) at Arogya Soudha.

Karnataka's COVID-19 Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) had, in December last year, recommended that the State should establish a Centre for Pandemic Preparedness (CPP) to help predict and prevent future outbreaks through stringent surveillance.

Command and control
To be funded by the Union Health Ministry, the HEOC will be a command and control facility where designated emergency management functions will be performed. "We have submitted a proposal to the Union Ministry in this regard and have also appointed a nodal officer for the Centre," State Health Commissioner Randeep D. told *The Hindu*.

In the last three years, as many as 40,269 people have lost their lives while over 40.74 lakh people have been infected by the different variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Over 46% of the total caseload and over 42% of the total fatalities are from Bengaluru Urban. The country's first death was reported from Kalaburagi on March 12.

Different waves
While hospitals saw an acute shortage of testing and diagnosis infrastructure through the first wave (March-October 2020), the

second wave (December 2020-November 2021), largely driven by Delta variant of SARS-CoV-2, caught the health authorities unawares. The State's health infrastructure was overwhelmed as the rise in caseload resulted in huge demand for hospital beds. Several patients died at home due to the non-availability of ICU beds and timely care. With many healthcare staff getting infected, lack of manpower also became a major issue.

However, the Omicron-driven third wave (January-March 2022 onwards) was milder. Although the surge in cases was huge, the severity was low and the demand for hospital beds and oxygen was negligible. The situation was under control as a major chunk of the population had been vaccinated with at least one dose by then.

Subsequently, in July-August 2022, there was a small spike but the situation was not serious as case numbers only fluctuated and have been at a low ebb since then. However, from March 1, 2023, onwards hospitalisations are gradually increasing in Bengaluru. From 12 hospitalisations on March 1, the number has gone up to 31

on Tuesday.

Karnataka started its combat against the pandemic by converting the government-run Victoria Hospital into a dedicated COVID facility. Subsequently, almost all secondary and tertiary care public health facilities were turned into COVID hospitals.

TAC's role
Karnataka has been one of the few States in the country to have taken the assistance of a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and an expert committee in pandemic management on a regular and continual basis. From its first meeting in April 2020, the TAC has held 196 meetings till date.

TAC chairman M.K. Sudarshan said the State is better prepared now. "Testing labs and critical care facilities, including oxygenated beds have been ramped up exponentially. Tele-ICUs and better clinical management protocols helped save many lives. Although the absolute numbers were high in the third wave, the death count was low as we had good treatment protocols in place after better understanding of the virus," he said.

Text & Context
A weekday feature on *The Hindu* epaper (epaper.thehindu.com) carries explainers, special articles and a quiz. In the latest issue (March 8, Wednesday), the following explainer is available:

■ Even with 'moderate emissions', India's heat is set to get worse bit.ly/heatrisingindia

You can use your smartphone's inbuilt features to access this article. If it's an Android phone, use Google Lens to read and tap the url to access the article. If it's an iPhone, use Live Text on camera to do the same.

Branch E C Member Priyanca Mathur's Distinction

We are delighted to share that **Prof. Priyanca Mathur**, Head of the Centre for Research in Social Sciences and Education, Jain (Deemed-to-be) University, Bengaluru was invited to **Ramapo College,** New Jersey, U.S.A. as their *Distinguished Schomberg Fellow* this term in March 2023. As part of the fellowship, Prof. Mathur engaged with students at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences and Global Studies at Ramapo. She also delivered public lectures on her current research projects that look at Myanmarese Refugees in India and Women in Higher Decision-Making in Politics in Indian States. She has recently co-authored an edited volume with Dr A Ravindra titled '*Discovering New India: Multiculturalism, Pluralism, Harmony*' (Jain University Press, 2022). Her areas of research and publications are international politics, refugee and forced migration studies, gender studies, public policy and governance.

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Branch Members' Writings in the Media

Do we need Governors?

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

Governors have been making news in the past few months. Be it Kerala, West Bengal, Maharashtra, or Tamil Nadu, they have been playing an active, albeit unusual, role in the politics of these states, prompting the Supreme Court to question governors' powers. In a way, it has revived the debate on the role of the governor in Indian democracy. Read more at:

https://www.deccanherald.com/opinion/comment/do-we-need-governors-1203830.html

Feedback

Dear Sir,

The March Newsletter is splendid, educative and very well brought out. The articles by Prof. Krishna Tummala and Prof. D. Jeevan Kumar stand out. Prof. Kumar has very well brought out the challenges and outlined the way forward for making grassroots level Democracy meaningful and people friendly. I wish the future issues of the Newsletter my very best.

With best regards,

Prof. P.S. Jayaramu
Former Professor of Political Science, Bangalore University and
Senior Fellow, ICSSR

B.R. Ambedkar > Quotes

Writings And Speeches: A Ready Reference Manual

- *"I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved."*

- *"Freedom of mind is the real freedom.*
  A person whose mind is not free though he may not be in chains, is a slave, not a free man.
  One whose mind is not free, though he may not be in prison, is a prisoner and not a free man.
  One whose mind is not free though alive, is no better than dead.
  Freedom of mind is the proof of one's existence."

- *"Cultivation of mind should be the ultimate aim of human existence."*

- *"Constitutional morality is not a natural sentiment. It has to be cultivated. We must realise that our people have yet to learn it. Democracy in India is only a top-dressing on an Indian soil which is essentially undemocratic."*

- *"I do not want that our loyalty as Indians should be in the slightest way affected by any competitive loyalty, whether that loyalty arises out of our religion, out of our culture or out of our language. I want all people to be Indians first, Indian last and nothing else but Indians."*

- *"Constitution is not a mere lawyers' document, it is a vehicle of Life, and its spirit is always the spirit of the Age."*

- *"If you ask me, my ideal would be the society based on liberty, equality and fraternity. An ideal society should be mobile and full of channels of conveying a change taking place in one part to other parts."*

- *"Every man must have a philosophy of life,*
  for everyone must have a standard by which to measure his conduct.
  And philosophy is nothing but a standard by which to measure."

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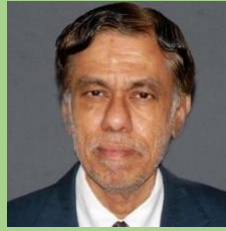
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