

## **BOARD OF REVENUE FOR RAJASTHAN**

### **TALK**

by



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on

**"A March to New Age India – 21<sup>st</sup>  
Century Challenges before Civil  
Services"**

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**A MARCH TO NEW AGE INDIA – 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY CHALLENGES BEFORE  
THE CIVIL SERVICES**

**INTRODUCTION**

It is indeed a great privilege for me to deliver this talk at the Indian Institute of Public Administration today.

I never envisaged a career in the IAS, my initial years of childhood were driven by an obsession to be a badminton champion. I learnt badminton at the elite NIS Patiala and LNCPE Gwalior, played for the State of Andhra Pradesh in South Zone Championships, National Championships, captained All India Central Schools and Osmania University for nearly a decade, winning the Junior National Championships in 1984 and the All India Universities in 1988. To be a champion required enormous discipline, dedication, fairplay and sportsmanship to win and lose matches, traits which I carried into the civil services.

I joined College of Technology, Osmania University as a student of Chemical Engineering in 1983. I realized that I had a tremendous flair for the subject and scored very high grades. As my grades improved to near perfection, in my M.Tech years, a career in Chemical Engineering beckoned. I kept getting selected for so many jobs in the petroleum industry, petrochemicals industry in what was a boom time for chemical engineers. Yet I was not destined to work on the shop-floor of an industrial plant despite studying the subject for 7 years.

I appeared for the civil services preliminary examination in June 1988, choosing Public Administration as my optional subject – a subject I did not know existed till a few months ago and topped India in the subject. I was selected into the IAS, in my first attempt at the Civil Services Examination, at the age of 22 years and 9 months, and assigned to Rajasthan cadre. Thus began my career in the IAS – as a generalist administrator in rural India, adjusting to life in the Thar desert, to Bajra ki roti and brackish water, as my rice eating days and memories of Godavari and Krishna delta seemed distant.

Thirty years later, after serving the Nation in the State Government, Central Government and International Organizations, I feel tremendous patriotism, moral and spiritual strength. I feel immense commitment to service and duty, to values and principles, to the institutions of governance. I have learnt to respect the rule of law and the great sense of responsibility that rests on the civil services to enforce law. I have learnt to treat people equally and not discriminate on grounds of caste, religion or gender. The civil services, particularly the IAS, is not an easy job, sometimes we are successful and sometimes we don't get the results we expect. It is important to strive to do better every day.

As an Institution, the Civil Services particularly the All India Services have always commanded considerable respect from the people of India. Such respect emanates from a perception that decision-making would be neutral and unbiased and would enable the Nation to achieve the objectives outlined in the Preamble of the Constitution.

In a broader sense, the challenges that civil servants face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are no different from those of the 20<sup>th</sup> century - **Commitment to the larger public good against all odds**. Further the New Age competency remains anchored in integrity, building credibility and trust in the institution of civil service. Even in a New Age India, these values are foundational and non-negotiable. You can hire skills, but leadership and faith in fairness and impartiality cannot be outsourced.

### **Indian Governance - The High Moral Tone**

Those who won freedom for India and created its constitutional system were men of rare talents and dedication. India's constitutional values are deeply rooted in high moral tones with a universal dimension.

In the Constituent Assembly, Acharya Kriplani said

“I want this house to remember that what we have enunciated are not merely legal, constitutional and formal principles, but moral principles and moral principles have got to be lived in life. They have to be lived, whether it is in commercial life, political life or the life of an administrator. They have to be lived throughout. These things we have to remember if our Constitution is to succeed.

These moral principles in the Indian Constitution have been reflected in the code of ethics for civil servants which include financial probity, integrity in work, intellectual honesty in tendering advice and morality in personal life. The code of conduct envisages All India Service officers to be model citizens well above the social norms of the times. Over the years, the Nation's personnel policies have established functional and comprehensive systems for assessing reputations for honesty and probity in public life.

### **The Global Policy Framework**

It is important to understand the convergence between global policy-making and the National policies. The G20 - the world's premier forum for international economic cooperation, has set itself an ambitious goal to lift the world's GDP by an additional 2.1 percent, which will add US\$ 2 trillion to the global economy and create millions of jobs. Trade and investment are important engines for growth, innovation, job creation and development.

Job creation remains a major challenge. Global supply chains are an important source of job creation. Digitalization is the opportunity for creating new and better jobs. The need to educate and train people with the necessary skills and assist them to adapt to change through vocational education and training along with quality apprenticeship are considered a felt need.

There is a global consensus on women's empowerment to bring down the gender gap in labor force participation by 25 percent by 2025. The eSkills4Girls initiative is an important initiative to promote opportunities and equal participation for women and girls in the digital economy in low income and developing countries.

Safeguarding against health crises and strengthening health systems has received a lot of attention along with combating antimicrobial resistance. Despite the United States withdrawal, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change has remained irreversible. "Investing in Climate, Investing in Growth" was the line adopted at the Hamburg G20 Leaders Summit. The efforts are to make globalization fairer and more sustainable.

### **The National Policy Framework**

The contemporary National Policy Framework can be broadly divided into 5 specific areas namely Fiscal Federalism, Affordable Healthcare, Transforming Rural India, Social Inclusion and Improving Quality of Public Service Delivery.

#### *Fiscal Federalism: Finance Commissions, GST and NITI Aayog*

In 1996, Rajasthan hosted a conclave of Opposition Chief Ministers seeking greater devolutions of approximately 33 percent of central resources from the divisible pool. Chief Minister Rajasthan had voiced concerns on the need for higher central transfers in a federal set-up to empower States. It often appeared that the ever-increasing size of CSSs, were completely taking away the flexibility of State Governments. The recommendations of the 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission represented transformational reform in India's fiscal federalism. The share of tax devolution to States increased to 42 percent of the divisible pool as against 32 percent recommended by the 13<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission. There was a compositional shift in fiscal transfers to States and considerable fiscal autonomy. The revenue receipts to Rajasthan increased by about 10 percent under the 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission providing significant flexibility in priority sector allocations.

The Goods and Services Tax came into force on July 1, 2017. It envisages creation of a unified common national market, prevents cascading of taxes, harmonizes laws & procedures and rates of tax, reduce the interface between the tax payer and the tax administration and benefits a large segment of consumers with low taxes. The GST Council provides a constitutional framework for voicing State's concerns in tax enforcement at a national forum.

The NITI Aayog has done enormous amount of work in the last 4 years. The “Transforming India’s Developmental Agenda” has placed emphasis on accelerated growth & inclusion strategies, employment generation, energy conservation and efficiency, good governance and Swach Bharat. The NITI Aayog’s 3-year Action Plan agenda has aimed at shifting the composition of expenditure by allocating a larger proportion of additional resources to high priority sectors.

*Affordable Health Care: Health For All*

India’s health scenario has been one of substantial disease burden, high infant and maternal mortality, low life expectancy, inadequate number of doctors, nurses and mid-wives, poor health infrastructure and low budgetary allocations. The National Health Policies entailed controlling infectious diseases, family planning, creation of teaching hospitals like AIIMS and promotion of infrastructure. One of the significant achievements of the National Health Policy 2002 has been the flagship health sector program – the National Rural Health Mission 2005. The NRHM created a huge people’s movement. Accredited Social Health Care (ASHA) workers as transformational change agents in every village, Village Health and Sanitation Committees, Rogi Kalyan Samitis acted as oversight bodies with JSY and Ambulance services incentivizing pregnant women to visit public health institutions in large numbers. Mission Indradhanush seeks to achieve full immunization of 90 percent children by 2020. The “Kayakalp – Clean Hospital” campaign has brought in significant improvements to hospital upkeep in public hospitals. Ayushman Bharat promises to transform India’s health care scenario with 10 crore people being provided high value medical insurance cover for treatment in elite hospitals.

The National Health Policy 2017 seeks to raise the health sector spending to 2.5 percent of GDP, create patient centric institutions, empower the patients and lay down standards for quality of treatment. The NHP 2017 seeks to strengthen health infrastructure to 2 beds/ 1000 population, provide free drugs, free diagnostics and essential health care in all public health institutions. There is a lot of emphasis on creation of several AIIMS like institutions across India, which is a major step to reform medical education. There has been a lot of emphasis to ensure adequate availability of specialist doctors and the number of PG seats, have been increased by 5000 seats/ annum. The Indian Medical Council (Amendment) Act 2018 provides for a uniform entrance examination for all medical institutions at undergraduate and post-graduate level.

*Transformation of Rural India: The Jan Dhan Yojana, the Aadhar Act and Mobile (JAM)*

Rapid agriculture growth and rapid rural employment growth were always the focus of India's policy makers. Mahatma Gandhi envisaged India as a Nation of self-sufficient autonomous village republics. It was in this backdrop that the Indian state implemented several welfare programs for the rural population.

Indian farmers were always concerned about the availability of adequate credit at reasonable cost in a timely manner. The Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana – the National Mission for Financial Inclusion ensured universal access to financial services in an affordable manner and resulted in a significant increase in credit flows to rural sector. The Aadhar Act 2016 was promulgated as a money bill to ensure targeted delivery of financial and other subsidies benefits and services. The Aadhar Act enabled the State to ask for information pertaining to a person's identity for disbursement of services/ subsidies. The third major step in this direction is the introduction of BHIM (Bharat Interface for Money), which is a mobile application facilitating e-payments directly through banks and promotes the drive to cashless transactions. Collectively the Jan Dhan Yojana, the Aadhar Act and Mobile applications have provided for a transparent government where subsidy flows reach the beneficiary in a timely and effective manner.

There has been a lot of focus on skill development and employment generation. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act implemented on a pan-India basis provides assured employment on individual and community based programs. The Skill India campaign together with the Make in India, Digital India, Smart Cities and Start-Up India/ Stand-Up India campaigns present a vast set of opportunities to train India's young population and place them in jobs to best realize the demographic dividend.

*Social Inclusion*

Social Inclusion refers to access to favorable opportunities in society to enhance one's life chances. Such opportunities comprise of education, employment, social services and social protection. India's Social Inclusion programs are comprehensive and their implementation supervised by a number of independent Ministries with adequate resource allocations. Not only have statutory legal provisions been enacted, autonomous National Commissions have been established to protect the rights envisaged by the Indian Constitution to the vulnerable sections. There are economic empowerment programs envisaged under the policies of Government implemented through the apex Finance and Development Corporations. The comprehensive implementation of National Policies aimed at Social Inclusion enables India to greatly empower her vulnerable population.

On International Women's Day dated March 8, 2018, the Prime Minister launched the National Nutrition Mission and pan India expansion of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao at Jhunjhunu in Rajasthan. The Prime Minister said that there was no question of discrimination based on gender and stressed on the importance of girls getting access to quality education just like boys. Emphasizing that a daughter is not a burden, the Prime Minister said that girls are bringing pride and glory to the Nation excelling in several fields.

The Accessible India campaign is a nationwide flagship campaign to ensure a barrier free and conducive environment for Divyangjans all over the country, launched by the Prime Minister on December 31, 2015, for creating universal accessibility for persons with Disabilities.

### *Improving the Quality of Public Service Delivery*

The first decade of 21<sup>st</sup> century governance were focused on improving delivery of public services. Most States formulated Legal Frameworks for Public Service Delivery. The State Acts envisaged providing public services within a time limit. The Acts also contained penalty provisions recoverable from the salary of the designated officer if the public services were not delivered within the stipulated time period.

In 2011, State specific Public Service Delivery Acts, were enacted by Rajasthan, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Delhi and Bihar.

A major step in bringing transparency to Public Services Delivery was the Right to Information Act 2005. The RTI Act has emerged as a vehicle for greater transparency about the manner of functioning of public agencies. Aadhar has the potential of transforming targeted service delivery, improving operational efficiency and reducing leakages. Aadhar has already been introduced as a key enabler for many types of service delivery including passport services, direct benefit transfers etc.

### **The Civil Services in 2018**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has witnessed a significant expansion of the Civil Services processes and responsibilities. The recruitment has become highly competitive, training norms more stringent, performance appraisal timely and constant evaluations have been introduced on the capacity of the civil servant to meet current challenges. There is greater emphasis on performance management practices. Effective management of public resources has necessitated open, transparent and accountable systems of delivery. The regulatory oversight by the Central Vigilance Commission, the Comptroller & Auditor General, the Central Bureau of Investigation has increased. Clearly accountability levels today are far higher than they ever were in the past.

For the Indian Administrative Service, 2018 represents a transformative phase. To address the needs of a well-staffed cadre, Government has accelerated the promotion processes. There is hope for a brighter future –the 2017 batch of IAS probationers at LBSNAA Mussoorie, the 2016 batch of IAS probationers at HCMRIPA and the 2014, 2015 batches who are serving in junior scale in the field have displayed characteristics of high morality, courage, independent decision making, an intrinsic motivation and an inner desire to excel to contribute to policy making.

A New Age India 2022, envisages Civil Servants as agents of change, striving for radical reforms and transformational governance. Relentless pursuit of excellence can only be achieved with enormous amount of dedication and seriousness of purpose. There are simply no shortcuts to success. Institutions rise and fall with individuals.

### **Future Policy Challenges**

#### *India's rise in the comity of Nations –need for an International Perspective*

Globalization and India's membership of the G20 member Nations has brought in the need for extensive international engagement by the senior civil servants. The need for a wider global perspective is important for success at National level and State level. Today virtually every Ministry in the Government of India has an international face and collaborations with many countries.

Civil Servants who were recognized at National level as Institution Builders were men who served in the Government of India as Deputy Secretaries and then rose to Joint Secretaries and subsequently served with distinction as Secretaries. They were deeply committed to pro-poor policies. Their understanding of India's institutions was honed by their long experience in several ministries in Government of India and further boosted by foreign postings. They had the courage, conviction and integrity to take decisions in critical challenging times. They had the capacity to engage with the political leadership in coherent policy discussions. Individually they contributed immensely to building strong institutions, which are the bulwark for better governance.

#### *Indian Democracy needs Strong Institutions*

The contribution of the All India Services to National integration has been well documented. The LBSNAA Mussoorie has significant anecdotal evidence on the courage and commitment displayed by District Collectors and District Superintendents of Police in facing many adverse situations.

Two of Institutions of Governance of Rajasthan with significant historical legacy are the District Collector and the Board of Revenue. The institutional legacy and sustenance is largely based on the vigor and enthusiasm that individual civil servants



have shown while serving in these institutions. At the National level, the separation of powers has ensured strong institutions flourished along with a free and independent press. It is critical for the sustenance of Indian Democracy that we contribute to strengthening institutions with significant historical legacy to benefit the lives of millions of citizens. Institutions are built by sound value systems and employee empowerment is achieved by synergizing the organizational objectives with individual aspirations creating a win-win situation for all stakeholders.

### *Quality Decision Making – the need for robust data*

21<sup>st</sup> century decision-making has become far more complex and has to be based on robust data sets. Quite clearly the statement that “In God we trust, everybody brings data to the table” is appropriate. There is a need for great emphasis on robust data collection, collation and analysis for considered decision making. The websites of Departments provide for large volumes of historical data, speeches, annual reports and technical papers. At the National level, the Ministry of External Affairs, NITI Aayog and the Reserve Bank of India provide huge volumes of data, speeches and important decisions on their websites. In Departments where datasets need strengthening, the provisions of the Collection of Statistics Act 2008 can be utilized to appoint statistics officers for collection and collation of statistics.

### *Generalists in an era of Specialists*

There is considerable space for a generalist administrator in the era of specialists. Having served in 2 highly technical institutions – the International Monetary Fund and the All India Institute of Medical Sciences –I will outline the characteristics of these specialized Institutions. The men and women in these Institutions were high achievers at a young age, worked on important problems, worked longer hours than their contemporaries and presented their achievements to the world.

The All India Services start young, enter service based on years of high intensity study and do represent the highest meritocracy. The Civil Servants are trained in the greatest training institution of India – the LBSNAA Mussoorie. There is a peer group to look-up to. Where civil servants differ from the Specialists is the number of conferences and conclaves that they attend to present their achievements to the world.

### *Greater regulatory oversight*

In 21<sup>st</sup> century’s liberalized era, regulatory oversight of key industry has become a critical area of governance. India is a young Nation and regulatory administration is a rapidly expanding subject. The most visible regulatory authority of India is the Reserve Bank of India established in 1935. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, the Competition Commission of India, the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority, the Insurance

Regulatory and Development Authority are amongst recently established regulatory authorities. A deeper understanding of industry and a roadmap for ensuring a level playing field are necessary for success of a civil servant working in a regulatory authority.

## **Conclusion**

I joined the IAS in 1989 and developed an intense interest in Public Administration. I greatly looked upto Dr. Y.V.Reddy from my student years. Late Shri Mitha Lal Mehta was my mentor in my first decade in Rajasthan. My life was greatly influenced by B.N.Yugandhar, S.Narayan, Duvvuri Subbarao and Rahul Khullar - I learnt a lot from each one of them. A life in the civil service tests resilience – marked by transfers, pressure groups, constantly changing policy prescriptions, new learnings every day. It is important to remain positive, to see the brighter side of governance and remain rule bound. The people of India look upto the IAS to deliver justice and enforce law. There is so much that we can do to ensure timely justice and efficient administration. The citizen is the centrality of a civil servant's odyssey, and commitment to the larger public good against all odds is the defining goal.

Over the past 3 decades in service –I have seen many men and women, who have contributed tirelessly to better governance. I am reminded of George Bernard Shaw's vision

“I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I love. I rejoice life for its own sake. Life is no brief candle for me, it is sort of a splendid torch which I have got hold of, for the moment and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.”

That's what a civil servant can be – an inspiration to one and all.

Jai Hind.

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