

Human Values and Ethics in Indian Politics

Dr.N.Sreeramulu *

Introduction

Political philosophy, or **political theory**, is the study of topics such as politics, liberty, justice, property, rights, law, and the enforcement of a legal code by authority: what they are, why (or even if) they are needed, what, if anything, makes a government legitimate, what rights and freedoms it should protect and why, what form it should take and why, what the law is, and what duties citizens owe to a legitimate government, if any, and when it may be legitimately overthrown, if ever. In a vernacular sense, the term "political philosophy" often refers to a general view, or specific ethic, political belief or attitude, about politics, synonymous to the term "political ideology". Political philosophy is considered by some to be a sub-discipline of political science; however, the name generally attributed to this form of political enquiry is political theory, a discipline which has a closer methodology to the theoretical fields in the social sciences (like economic theory) than to philosophical argumentation (like that of moral philosophy or aesthetics). Administration means not only the public administration but it includes also all activities of the government set up undertaken to provide social, economic, defence and other services to the citizens for their all round development, protection and peaceful living. It is required to have capability to acquire the changes in society for the welfare of the citizens. Its successes and failures depend upon execution of plans and programmes by its agencies and institutions. A good plan can be successful only with clean, effective and impartial administration. A large number of public servants and functionaries are involved at different levels of administration to meet the demands of people and to check their conduct is a difficult task. We see that influences exercised by political parties, pressure groups and other lobbies affect the duties and responsibilities of the administration. There is huge problem to maintain the moral

* **M.A.Ph.D Academic Consultant, Dept.of Political Science and Public Administration, S.V.U. College of Arts, S.V.University, Tirupati**

standards and human values in the conduct of public affairs in democratic setup of Indian administration. As the character, credibility and future of the government depends upon ethics and fulfilment of the social responsibilities by the public servants hence it is the first duty of the centre as well as state governments to provide a clean administration by inculcating the ethics and human values in their administration.

Human Values and Ethics

Ethics ensure outer desired behaviours. They include the disciplined actions of the doers under given compulsions, apparently meeting the requirements. But they may be broken the moment these compulsions are no more. However, if sound values are inculcated within, the actions become voluntary, spontaneous and self motivated. Naturally, such actions will be much more effective, humane and wholesome in nature. Values are concerned with the character and conduct of a person. Values also evaluate the actions of the person with reference to their being good or bad, right or wrong. We can also say that values are the moral principles of the individuals. There are certain human actions which are accepted as universal human values such as honesty, integrity, forgiveness, gratitude, non-violence etc. The traits of a person guide him to become good or bad. The traits which we consider desirable in the society make him good and which undesirable make him destructive, arrogant, greedy and angry. Undesirable traits lead him to work against established values, on the other hand desirable traits lead him to act positively i.e. to act for humanity and not for self alone.

Political and Administrative reforms

The things like justice, clean administration, ethical values and social responsibilities remained in existence only for two or three decades after the independence. Then a new class of politicians entered in politics. The sole aim of this class was to earn money and power by hook or crook. These politicians and other influential persons started interfering in the day to day functioning of the civil administration with their influence, money and muscle power. They started to take illegal benefits from the administration and to exercise the illegal practices e.g. corruption and nepotism for their financial gains. These practices of elite class have been prevailing till this date and the people of India are feeling aggrieved,

though their unawareness, less education and less co-ordination are also root causes for the above situation. The report of second commission on administrative reforms noted that ‘Perhaps the most important determinant of the integrity of a society or the prevalence of corruption is the quality of politics. If politics attracts and rewards men and women of integrity, competence and passion for public good, then the society is safe and integrity is maintained. But if honesty is incompatible with survival in politics, and if public life attracts undesirable and corrupt elements seeking private gain, then abuse of authority and corruption become the norm’. In our country we find illegal and corrupt practices in every sphere of life. There is low morale, favouritism, casteism, nepotism and bribery in every office and institution of the government. Most of the private sector is prone to apply illegal methods to save the income tax and other taxes levied by the government administration. Though the law of land does not permit these things but we find a big gap in law and its enforcement i.e. in theories and practice. This contradiction in belief and action give pains and sufferings to the citizens. They feel tension and stress due to undesirable behavior of the agents and employees of administration. The main agent of the government that formulates the policies and executes plans for it, is bureaucracy. ‘The enormous expansion of public service has led to the expansion of bureaucracy. This has also resulted in the multiplication of the administrative processes whereby administrative power and discretion are vested at different levels of the executive.’⁷ Santhanam Committee reported ‘where there are power and discretion there always a possibility of their abuse in terms of maladministration and corruption. After the independence the bureaucracy has not played its role well. Rather it became an instrument of some mighty, arrogant and self-centred corrupt politicians in providing by them a non-transparent and bad administration. ‘The bureaucracy can create bottle-necks in the economic and political development through red-tapism, heartless attitudes and narrowly conceived actions. A political system therefore needs an ideal efficient and workable bureaucracy to achieve political development.

Morality

The conduct rule of government servants also gives a general rule that they should not do anything which is unbecoming of a government servant. Though we have very skilled people in the administration but decline in values system is deteriorating the situation and

resulting in unhappiness, insecurity and tensions in minds of the general public. Our constitution and religious books are containing codes and directions on values and ethics to be followed by citizens/humans as well as the states but the materialistic goals are now upsetting our old age value system. Every person of the society is now eager to prosper in the shortest period of time by adopting illegal and wrong means. The material prosperity has become glamour to the society and the persons with values of simplicity, honesty, hard work and character building seem cheated in this atmosphere. Many efforts through legislations and through other modes were made by the government to set its record straight but due to lack of will the situation never improved. The Santhanam Committee, which was appointed in 1962 for administrative reforms, observed that honesty and integrity of ministers, parliament members and members of legislatures are important factors in creating social awareness against corruption.¹⁰ Again in 1968 a Lokpal Bill was introduced in the parliament. Though it failed but it created awareness in masses for clean governance. For the first time in 1997 an Ethics Committee (Rajaya Sabha) was constituted in India to study the causes of erosion of morality and social values in administration and to suggest the measures/ ethics to build the confidence of people in the governance. This committee stated in the opening paras of its report in reference to public servants that 'By and large, the ideological base and the spirit of service which should activate most of them is getting eroded and the kind of elements who are trying to influence the political parties and the political system at large, make everybody think as to how probity in the entire system could be ensured. There may be many ways for ensuring probity in public life, but a self-disciplining mechanism, appears to be the best in an institution like Parliament. Now again in 2011 the question of good governance and ethical values in politics is being debated in parliament, media and peoples' forum. The ailment of corruption in the administration is being condemned everywhere. The centre government is going to introduce Lokpal and Judicial Accountability Bill to curb the menace of corruption and nepotism. The Right to Information Act has already been introduced for transparency in governance. There is a big hope that the centre as well as state governments would take more steps to provide good and clean governance as per their constitutional responsibility. 'The professed aim of government, its form or label, has always been the service of the people it governs. The people's satisfaction has been the bed-rock of its stability. Disregard for people's

satisfaction leads initially to an attitude of ambivalence, then to alienation and finally to breaking point, revolt.’¹² Though the situation is yet not well but one could hope that with the implementation of some effective measures some ethical norms would re-enter in the administration to perform its administrative and social responsibilities. In addition to this we also have to bring the ethical and moral values in our day to day life and unite against the unethical and illegal practices prevailing in our administration as well as in society. Shri Anna Hazare also gave a birth to peoples’ movement to make India free from corruption which has sensitized public opinion against this evil. This is a good note that people have willingly come forward to support the cause. We should remember the words of Father of our Nation. Writing in Young India on 6 December 1928 ,Gandhi Ji stated, ‘Corruption will be out one day, however much one may try to conceal it, and the public can, as it is its right and duty in every case of justifiable suspicion, call its servants to strict account, dismiss them, sue them in a law court, or appoint an arbitrator or inspector to scrutinize their conduct, as it likes.

Conclusion

Even global community has suddenly woken up to the call for switching over to the alternative vision of sustainable development. However, the alternative sustainable development strategy seems faltering amidst of unsustainable ideas and practices inspired by materialistic progress and over emphasis on selfish interests of nations and individuals alike. The moot question is how the prevailing development paradigms fashioned and refashioned to suits the needs of evolving globalized economy is capable of facing these challenges? What are its ethical foundations? What alternative ethical framework or vision we can evolve? And finally, how the Indian ethical framework is relevant for this alternative vision. Talking of ethics in terms of politicians is the most traumatic joke of the day. In every big scandal, whether, Telgi Stamp Case, Jain Dairy Case, bank security scam, Tehelka Case, Hawala case, Fodder scam, we find wires connected to some powerful politicians. Is it the same India, where Lal bahadur Shastri resigned over a solitary rail accident, where A.K. Antony resigned over the issue for which he was not even responsible and O.V. Alagesan resigned from the Central Cabinet over the alleged imposition of Hindi in the erstwhile Madras State Many politicians have reached the nadir of immortality when as a last ditch

effort to grab power, they resort to both capturing and rigging with the help of criminals and dreaded gangsters. A leader in the office has the authority to direct the course of nation's socio-economical development. He enjoys the powers to make policies for developmental activities to be initiated at a macro level. But if he himself becomes corrupt, spells unethical and immoral acts it can wreck havoc on the country. The ills of communalism, casteism, nepotism have gradually become the necessity of political arena. Rightly observed by our late Prime Minister Sh. Rajiv Gandhi, that out of 100 only 17% is actually spent on the developmental work and rest goes into the pockets of officials and politicians. today our country has acquired many ills such as corruption, casteism, communalism, etc all because the leaders have forgotten their moral and ethical duties towards their Motherland and have the motto to grab the power and earn money by any means. People have lost faith in their leaders. The youth are disillusioned, are moving to the west for higher education, and then settle there permanently. Voters have become increasingly indifferent towards the process of election. The situation is undoubtedly grave. It is not appropriate to blame the politicians alone. It is even the public that is responsible in making the politicians corrupt, unethical, and goons. Even the most rational approach to ethics is defenceless if there isn't the will to do what is right. It is not to conclude that all the politicians are corrupt and unethical. The hope lies with such honest, dedicated and devoted politicians who have sacrificed a lot for the welfare of this nation. It is high time that we enforce a code of conduct to stem the root and begin this exercise. A transparency in the working is very urgently needed. Responsible opposition and the media can play a vital role in exposing the immoral and unethical corrupt politicians. Let us generate a ray of hope that the people of country use their rights and duties in favour of dedicated, sincere and honest leaders for the good of themselves and for the welfare of this great nation. We need timeless principles to steer by in running our organizations and building our personal careers. We need high standards... the ethics of excellence.

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