

## **P.S. KRISHNAN AND THE SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OF A CIVIL SERVANT: FOURTH MEMORIAL LECTURE- A REPORT**

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*The Fourth Memorial Lecture of Dr.P.S.Krishnan a committed civil servant was delivered by Prof K. S.Chalam while the family members of Krishnan, his colleagues like Sri. K.Madahava Rao, MallepalliLaxmayya and others were present on line. There were also some reflections on Krishnan life and mission by his family members and colleagues after the lecture. The following is the text of the lecture.*

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P.S.Krishnan was one of the most distinguished civil servants of India belonging to a generation that entered the public service to build the nation after independence. P.S Krishnan entered Andhra Pradesh IAS cadre in 1956 and carried with him the memory of his childhood reminiscences of learning about untouchables from his father while circumbulatingAnantpadmanabha Sawmy Temple in Tiruvananthapuram. Prof VasanthDevi wrote about his experiences and biographical facets as 'A Crusade for Social Justice-Bending Governance to the Deprived 'narrated how he combined in himself the ideologies of Gandhi, Marx, Ambedkar, Periyar and Narayana Guru , a rare recipe of ideas to imbibe in his life and mission of upliftment of the deprived. He started his career as an Assistant Settlement Officer, Ananatpur , Andhra Pradesh in 1959 and encountered an ugly episode of bonded labourers among the untouchables. It is narrated by him to Prof VasanthaDevi , his biographer as, "On my way back from Rektala, 3 Dalit brothers from Chinna kowkuntla, a hamlet of Pedda kowkuntla signaled me to stop. All the 3 brothers had the same name ?Ramaiah with suffixes indicating their seniority. The eldest was called Pedda(elder) Ramaiah, the youngest was called Chinna (younger) and the one between them was called Nadmi (middle) Ramaiah. Nadmi Ramaiah alone in the midst of this economy in naming had the luxury of an alternate name i.e. Katavappa. But this luxury was of doubtful quality because "Katavaa" in Telugu means black hard rock, a characteristic feature of the area. I halted in that hamlet to hear them. They complained to me that they had taken a loan from a rich landowner of the village called Kesani Narsaiah who belonged to the local dominant landowning class. They had to repay the loan by working without wages on his land. They

complained that they had worked enough to account for the loan and more, but they were still not being released. I sent for the rich landowning money lender and got his version. On return back to Anantpur, I called a lawyer called Krishna Reddy who was known in the area as a communist. I told him "You call yourself a communist, look at this case and try to help the victims." I explained to him the case of the Ramaiahs. He issued a notice to the land owning money lender. The notice showed that on the basis of the number of days they had worked without wages, they had not only repaid their loan along with lawful interest but there was a surplus which should be returned to them. The interest was calculated according to AP Agriculturist's Debt Relief Act. The notice was served on the land lord. But, the Ramaiah brothers then came to complain that on receipt of the lawyer's notice the land owning money lender was indulging in violence towards them. I thereafter handed over the case to the Inspector of the local police station? Sri Obaiah who was fortunately a member of the SC community who ensured that the three Ramaiah brothers were not subjected to any more violence." This was the first case of bonded labour that the administration came across in Andhra Pradesh and perhaps in India, 16 years before the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Ordinance was promulgated by the President of India on 25.10.75. This is how P.S. Krishnan started his career as a socially conscious committed administrator as a young civil servant with lot of enthusiasm and gut feeling to bring change in the social maladies. He later encountered severe rebuke from his senior Mr Anant Raman who did not like his unbecoming of an upper caste volition to help untouchables and reprimanded him and also made an adverse remark on his personal record. This shows the divergent modes of functioning of civil servants coming from same social background one a reactionary and the other social revolutionary. Both the models seem to be possible in the Indian civil service mandate.

P.S. Krishnan is one of the very few who chose the line or what is called in the administrative jargon 'domain knowledge' as 'socially marginalized groups' to take on. It appears that he has deliberately chosen this field as we can clearly specify from his career from the very beginning till the end of his life in 2019 at the age of 85. This is a rare quality in a civil servant particularly coming from upper caste (Brahmin) background from a notorious region, Kerala that

prescribed measured distances between untouchables and others. In fact the First Administrative Commission in 1968 has identified 8 broad areas of specializations: economic, industrial, agricultural and rural development, social and educational, personnel, defence and internal security and planning. In other words Krishnan has chosen the domain in 1956 before the ARC has identified social sector as an important area of administration. The list is further expanded to 11 areas by Surendranath Committee in 2003 by the time Krishnan superannuated. But, Nath committee has retained Social sector and dropped Planning and added sectors like, Natural Resources and Environment, Communication, Housing and Urban Affairs. The importance of social sector is found to be very important in a country that is socially fragmented and gave prominence to ritual purity to dominate public affairs. The British India government has brought some legislative measures to stop inhuman practices like sati, untouchability, slavery, prohibition of child marriage etc. But, at the executive level there was only a Special Officer who was Commissioner for Scheduled castes and tribes to investigate matters relating to safeguards of Sc and ST people with regional offices in states. The members of parliament belonging to S.C and S.T have demanded that the single man commission was not sufficient to safeguard the constitutional provisions and a resolution was moved to amend Article 338 for the appointment of a special officer and in the process the government has proactively brought a multi member system of commission in 1978 with Bholu Paswan Sastry as the first Chairman. Later the 338 Article was amended several times to create separate commissions for Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes and Women. It appears that P.S.krishnan has played a role in the creation of Backward Classes Commission in 1993 as Member Secretary and continued with the commission till 2000. This is important to note that if a socially conscious civil servant is at the policy making position things will move in favour of the marginalized.

Apart from making notes for creating administrative structures, P.S.krishnan brought his field experience in to the system to streamline Acts like the Prevention of Atrocities Act 1989 and the amendments brought to incorporate articles to satisfy the judiciary. As a young civil servant Krishnan used to camp in the Dalit habitations and lived with them to learn about the tribulations of untouchables

and to get first hand experiences or lived knowledge. This has infuriated the conventional civil servants who considered perhaps that Krishnan was unbecoming of a Brahmin who was breaking traditions and created problems for himself. But Krishnan did not care for such incidents and continued his onslaught against caste discrimination and inhuman practices that he has abhorred from his childhood. He has not only theoretically condemned in his notes and writings about the inhuman caste system, but practically shown by marrying outside his caste Madam Shantha, calling it as Anti-caste marriage. This is a remarkable gesture of act that makes him a unique civil servant.

### **Social Accountability**

The commitment to social justice by a civil servant is not charity or benevolent gift of a civil servant in India; rather it is part of their duty. It has been mandated that the important function of a civil servant is to deliver public goods to the people and in the case of socially marginalized to facilitate the supply of merit goods like education. In order to understand this important component of the job of a civil servant that emerges from the All India Services Act 1951 that itself is an outcome of Constitutional provision under Art 308, 309, 311 and 312. This is relevant here to understand that P.S. Krishnan has sincerely lived up to the word and spirit of the civil services rules drafted on the basis of the 1951 Act. It was clearly mentioned in the rules that one of the important duties of a civil servant in India is to respond to the needs of the weaker sections of the society. The 1968 All India Services (Conduct) Rules 1968 under Article 3 General, noted that the civil servant shall at all times maintain absolute integrity and devotion to duty. Among the several important duties and commitments listed in the Rules, item IV notes, 'Accountability and Transparency and V Responsiveness to the Public, particularly to the weaker section'. It is important to note that the incumbent should 'commit himself to and uphold the supremacy of the Constitution and democratic values.' P.S. Krishnan as a sincere and honest civil servant chose social welfare as the domain of his career and breathed his last in the same line of Endeavour. He noted several times that the Constitution was his shield throughout his career as he has sincerely upheld the values as enshrined in it.

Social Accountability as the expected outcome of an activity in public service is the sine qua non of a civil servant in India. Therefore, we may reflect on the life and achievements of P.S.krishnan in the traditions of accountability of a civil servant not only to the state but also to the public and conscience within the space of Constitutional Morality at large. Unfortunately, the concept of social accountability is reduced to that of accounting of outcome measures for a commercial investment and named it as 'Social Audit' by World Bank. The investments and targeted loans of Banks including World Bank look at the mundane commercial interests of profit margins and outcomes to see whether the investment gives the expected monetary returns. It is a very narrow concept being put in to practice in several government schemes where investments came from World Bank and account for the same through certain prescribed tangible tools. The social accountability concept of the World Bank is too narrow to apply to social justice department. The World Bank or any private investment company looks at the social accountability through: 1 participatory budgeting, 2. Public expenditure tracking surveys, 3.Social audit, 4. Citizen reporting, 5.Participatory research and tracking outcome evaluation , 6. Policy Formulation, 7. Governance redressel and other umpteen number of forms to be filled and officially filed. This has become a routine now for the subordinate staff and assistants to spend most of the time on these issues often at the cost of the real benefits to the people. This banking business is mundane and does not involve any creative inputs to improve the outcomes of a social group that is marginalized or ostracized like the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes that are constitutional categories. In this context Krishnan service to the people is real and socially and morally accountable is different from the World Bank or Management concepts of accountability.

The First Administrative Commission reviewed the functioning of the civil services in India and noted the attributes of an administrator and also listed out important domains of work. Social welfare is found to be an important area of work by 1968 by that time Krishnan was already in it. The Appleby Committee in the UK has listed 11 important attributes of a civil servant. They are: willingness to assume responsibility, ability to deal with more problems, a strong bent toward action, a good listener, effective with people, capacity to build his own

strength and the organization, capacity to use institutional resources, avoid using power for self, welcoming reports of troublesome things, team worker and a good initiator. By the time the second Administrative Reforms Commission under Veerappa Moily submitted its report Krishnan demitted office as full time servant but continued to serve the nation in different roles. It is very important to note that he continued to adhere to the social responsibility as a norm and not accountability as a narrow tool to measure outcomes as expected by a banker. It is really a big task to measure the contributions of Krishnan to the socially marginalized in terms of the above tools as his contributions are beyond such measures.

### **Important Contributions of Krishnan**

The active involvement of Krishnan in the service of the socially and educationally backward castes and scheduled castes and tribes span over a period of more than half a century (1956-2019). He was involved in several government policy formulation exercises that relate to the department of Social Welfare both at the centre and in the state of Andhra Pradesh. He was Member Secretary of National Backward Classes Commission during 1993-2000 and adviser to the government thereafter. Therefore one can notice the wide range of issues in which he was either consulted or involved in the formulation of policies. In addition to his official association with the government policies and programmes , Krishnan himself initiated civil society activity like the National Forum for Social Justice and drafted the Dalit Manifesto. He was Chief Adviser to redraft the Prevention of Atrocities Act 1989 and when there was an adverse comment on the Act in the apex court, he was consulted to revise the rules in 2015. We have selected some important schemes that Krishnan proposed during his official and public career as follows:

1. Land to the Tiller. (He comes from Kerala therefore there appears to be an echo of the Left parties agenda of land to the tiller). However, Krishnan was very specific to the land distribution particularly to the dalits who are landless but tillers. A. Irrigation to the lands of the dalits B. Stop alienation of tribal lands C. Land Banks scheme where the state shall maintain a land bank of the lands that are available for distribution particularly purchasing lands from the distress

sale of dalits and keeping with them and selling them only to dalits or distribute free of cost.

2. Provision of viable assets or creation of tangible assets for dalits
3. Housing for dalits at all locations
4. Identification of Specially vulnerable groups SVGs among dalits and particularly vulnerable tribes PVTGs among tribes and special programmes to address their backwardness
5. Rehabilitation and Resettlement of Manual scavenging and creation of National Safaikarmachari Finance and development corporation
6. Strengthening of NSCFDC
7. Networking of Anganwadis and Pre Matric schools of dalits for maintaining standards
8. Post Matric Scholarships and Rajiv Gandhi scholarships for dalits
9. Human Rights education and banishing untouchability in all educational institutions
10. Presence of reserved category persons in higher judiciary
11. Planning commission schemes for dalits need not be changed
12. The Tribal sub plan is to be applied to Scheduled castes as Special Component Plan SCP for dalits
13. Women among the SC and ST should be provided with 50 per cent in all schemes
14. Filling up of Backlog vacancies
15. To create effective demand, it is necessary to eliminate landlessness of dalits with funds to buy lands for them that will solve the problem of lack of demand in the economy.

Krishnan is one of the very few civil servants with deep sense of social accountability has helped the marginalized groups to stand on their own legs with self respect and dignity. He has argued for the due share from the national

exchequer as it is they that contribute to the national income through their labour. However, there are scholars like Bhagawati, DebRoy and few others who are critical about the role of civil servants as a bunch of rent seekers without understanding their important role in nation building and as instruments of social justice. Some of the critics themselves are players of rent seeking behavior as their social background and inheritance of patrimonial capital (Thomas Pilketty) itself shows that without contributing much to the nation, they have been drawing rents from society in the form of huge income and property. In fact the spiritual grandfather of this theory James Buchanan was in trouble in 2018 when Mac Lean has published the book 'Democracy in Chains'. The book has exposed the deep conspiracy funded by Koch Bros in the USA, a corporate body active in supporting such theories as public choice, rent seeking etc at the same time blind to the corporate loot of the state not only during Reagan administration but thereafter everywhere through Washington consensus. This lobby has made some of the countries to embark upon NPM (New Public Management) with the slogan 'less government more governance so that the corporates can loot and plunder the hard earned incomes of the poor invested in public sector enterprises. The criticism that some civil servants are selfish and corrupt is not related to just government officers, the behavior has encompassed the whole society with little concern for empathy for the poor and marginalized after liberalization. This behavior of the few multinational business houses and the intellectual support received by the self seeking one dimensional individual to the current situation, not only in India but everywhere has resulted in few individuals controlling trillions of dollars without any remorse. Inequalities have been widened across groups and nations. It is here, we need not only civil servants like P.S.Krishnan but also the person who committed to his social conscience as an Indian.

The life and work of Krishnan is an important case study to be offered as a course in civil services training to make the young recruits understand the broad mandate of their service is to remain loyal to the constitutional objectives and not to be carried away by short sighted and narcissistic criticism of some intellectuals. In fact, civil services in the third world countries are different from the colonies that have exploited and plundered the colonies including the native populations as in the USA. They don't have either the experience or morality to



teach the civil servants in India that has a long history of state service from the time of Kautilya. It is easy to excel in departments that have resources and measurable targets to indicate the performance of a civil servant. But working in Social Justice, Human Development, Rural Development, Municipal Administration etc that are people centric gives more tangible benefits to the society at large in the long run and self satisfaction and jeevanmukti to the committed civil servant who is remembered always in the memories of common man. P.S.Krishnan is definitely one of the very few who remains as a classic example to motivate successive generations of civil servants in India.