

Swamy, M. R. Kumara

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Clerkocracy in India

by Professor Dr M. R. Kumara Swamy, Poona

The hopeless regime of clerkocracy is rampant in India—it is for this reason that the services of many of our productive people are running to waste. A dignified clerk (fairly well educated) may be defined as a person holding a top rank in the administration, who does not want to get involved with the actual administrative problems facing his department. An undignified clerk may be defined as an uneducated person (a matriculant) holding a lower rank in the administration, who is authorised to handle in turn all important cases pertaining to the department. For this reason, he cannot assess what is right in the wrong place and what is wrong in the right place. Dignified and undignified clerks cannot appreciate the concept of hard work, as they are not seriously involved with whatever they do. They use emotions instead of their minds. Not only the services of dignified head clerks but also of undignified clerks (uneducated, incompetent and unexposed to the outcome of modern civilisation) may be considered unproductive in every sense of the term. These unproductive people have been suppressing the intellectual and the productive abilities of the intermediate category, viz., the middle group.

Opportunist Tendencies

It is regrettable to learn that the opportunist tendencies have tended to make the Indian ministers change their portfolios from one specialised field to another like moving from physics to chemistry or to biology, though a physicist is incapable of judging the work of a chemist, and a chemist cannot judge the work of a biologist. The former Minister for Planning is now holding the portfolio of Petroleum, Chemicals and Social Welfare. Further, a former member (Education) of India's Planning Commission is now Minister for Shipping and Tourism. It is no wonder that India has a toppled economic plan! In spite of India's development planning since 1951 (agriculture based, industry oriented and mixed cream), yet the country has been facing serious problems especially on the front of agriculture: Professor N.V. Sovani very well points out, "our politics is very relevant to planning, because planning is also a political process. Our politics is that of an immature democracy wherein the democratic institutions have already outrun the democratic instincts and 'mores' of the mass of voters. Our planning has been geared by accident or design, to the general elections, and each five year plan almost serves for the party in power as its election manifesto. An election manifesto must, by its very nature, promise everything to everybody

and that, too, without costs." (All India Economic Conference, "Presidential Address", December 1965).

Recruitment of Service Officials

It may be noted with very deep regret that the system of recruitment of people to run the administration of this great "country of unity in diversity" is very bad. The serious bureaucratic evils of the Indian administration are attributed to the continual flow of the incompetent, immature, badly trained IAS (Indian Administrative Service) and allied service staff who are recruited every year, and are found scattered in all states of this country, for purposes of administering the country. It is an "open" secret that a good university or college examinee gets through the IAS and allied services examinations. Let us make clear that a good examinee is not necessarily a good administrator—the IAS interviews don't mean much (factors other than competence matter here). It may be asked as to how the UPSC (Union Public Service Commission), IAS Interview Boards, etc., in a period of between fifteen to thirty minutes can come to a definite conclusion, about the suitability or non-suitability of a candidate to run the administration of the country. The Union Government, responsible for the recruitment of the IAS and other allied service officials, might come forward with the supporting argument that the IAS selectees are given training at the National Academy of Administration before their posting as probationers. I wish to point out here that the National Academy trains people to get involved with the outcomes of modern civilisation, viz., wine, woman and whiskey. I have known hundreds of cases where non-smokers, non-alcohol takers, during their college career, have turned out to be chain smokers and drinkers. As a part of the National Academy training, the selectees are taken round several parts of the country on "Bharat Darsan" (Glimpse of India). They visit factories, distinguished people, laboratories, military wings, etc., for one to two hours—and they cannot afford to have a glimpse of India; but they should get personally involved with whatever they do. Getting personally involved is the key for good and productive administration. The IAS officials have proved to be a liability to the productive capacity of the country.

The Indian Foreign Service

My observations in several parts of the world have shown that a large majority of the members of the IFS (Indian Foreign Service) have proved themselves

as very bad ambassadors of India. Their knowledge of Indian history, economics, philosophy are very superficial and shaky. Although there have been suggestions after suggestions to improve the Indian background of the IFS officers, yet the Union Government seems to be silent on these productive suggestions.

Another instance of investment in irrationality is that a highly productive Indian (one who has acquired very advanced and specialised training in a branch of study in USA, which is badly needed for India's economic development), upon understanding that the Union Government Recruitment Board is visiting the USA, approached the Indian Embassy, asked for an interview with the visiting Government Recruitment Board to discuss the possibilities of his joining in aiding India's economic development. The Indian Embassy, in turn, fails to respond to his letter or to his request. If a reply is received at all, it will arrive only after the Board has left the USA. If, in some cases, there is a reply from the Embassy, the official at the Embassy, who is incompetent to judge the merit of this highly productive Indian, prefers to undertake himself the "social" trip to the candidate's place of residence. I want to point out that this Indian Official's trip to any part of the USA is wasting the Indian Government's precious foreign exchange for no productive returns. He enjoys the plane trips, and has a good time. May I suggest to the Union Government to cooperate with the private sector to stop this form of investment in irrationality? Any educated and a travelled person, having wide experiences with men and affairs, cannot tolerate any more of such irrational activities. Let us take a selfless and patriotic look at India's economic development in order to recover ourselves from the present awkward position India is faced with.

Procurement of Training

Let us now take a look at the question of investment in human capital with special reference to the gap involved (gestation period) between the acquirement of training and its implementation with reference to the Indian economy. In the instance where the technological advancement is not continual, capital input exceeds capital output. At this point, let us concern ourselves with the questions of input and output, keeping in view the expenditure aspect of the procured training. It seems helpful to concentrate on the procurement of training abroad by Indian nationals and its use by Indian organisations: The USAIE (formerly called TCM), in joint cooperation with the National Council of Applied Economic Research and the Government of India, about the year 1961-62, conducted interviews with Indians trained abroad under the TCM programme. It may be pointed out with profound regret that 95 per cent of the trained persons felt that their training, although accomplished with personal gains, was considered inappropriate and unsuitable for the Indian concerns (both private and government enterprises), and, therefore, was unproductive from the aspect of India's economic development.

At this point, it seems beneficial to calculate the cost of this unproductive investment in human capital:

6 month training period:
Scholarship \$ 1,500 (at \$ 250 p.m.)
Travelling Allowance \$ 1,700 (Intra and inter-country)
Books and Stationery \$ 200
Miscellaneous \$ 150
Total \$ 3,550 for six months or
approximately 27,000 Indian rupees.

It may be pointed out that the US Government and the Indian Government have to spend about 27,000 Indian rupees on the unproductive training. Is this spending desirable? Does this training help the Indian as a person or does it help the country's economic development? It is evident that the training is more of a personal gain than to the country's advantage. It reminds me of the contributions by the US Peace Corps Representatives whose purpose is to broaden their own experience with men and affairs; in other words, they are learners rather than learned.

Measures to Stimulate Economic Growth

The present Planning Commission of the Indian Government must be scrapped completely as the members of this body are people who are highly incompetent in dealing with the technical and economic complexities of planning in India. Their knowledge of economics, physics, chemistry, geology, etc., are most outdated.

It may be suggested that if India wants to go in for rational economic planning then the Planning Commission must consist of active people who should be chosen from among senior staff of universities and colleges. The period of membership must vary from two to three years. In this case, their knowledge on the scientific and economic front would be most up to date.

Indian Government must stop recruiting people to the Indian Administrative Service and the Indian Foreign Service for the next six years. Those people who are involved with the actual administrative set up (not only from the technical aspect but also in the non-technical field) must be entrusted with the work of administration.

It is high time that the administrative officials do sincere and honest work by getting involved with what they do. It is high time that the dignified clerks of the Indian Government don't waste time by having snacks and coffee and idle talks during office hours. Let them take a personal interest in the administrative problems.

In order for India to be a self-reliant economy, it must turn to free enterprise which encourages competition, that in turn, is the signal of prosperity and economic progress. Let us pray that there would not be any bank nationalisation in India. Should such an irrational decision by the Government take place, India will certainly undergo a more serious economic disaster.