

## **The Community of Ethics**

### **A short note on Civil Service Vision**

It is a curious fact that the Civil Services in India, despite being mandated in the Constitution, do not have a vision for themselves to follow. The civil servants are not guided by any self imposed mission. They do not think in terms of developing themselves to an ideal profile. They are content following the laws, rules and regulations given to them.

It is worth mentioning that the civil services of several countries including United Kingdom, Singapore, Uganda and Botswana have given expression to their vision.

In the last seven decades, the leaders of the civil services both at the Union and state government levels have avoided the issue for no plausible reason. Personally, I am also guilty of this lapse. It didn't occur to me when I was the Cabinet Secretary, and nobody raised the issue with me. I could have initiated the assignment for formulating a vision for the Civil Services of India.

We, in the IC Centre for Governance, have deliberated on the need for the civil servants to have a Vision, a Mission and some guiding Core Values. An envisioning exercise in this context was carried out a couple of years ago (*Annexure*). The conclusions of the said exercise were conveyed to the Cabinet Secretary and the Cadre Controlling Authorities of various All India Services and Central Services for their consideration. It was expected that at least a few of them will pay some attention to it.

Unfortunately, they didn't.

The exercise of formulating a vision statement for civil services was repeated during the IC CfG training programme on *Leadership in Public Service* sponsored by the Department of Personnel and Training in February 2020 just before the pandemic struck. The participants belonging to different services were asked whether Vision was a necessary requirement of civil services. They overwhelmingly responded in the affirmative and expressed a desire to attempt a formulation on their own.

The officers, who belonged to different services, divided themselves in three groups and proceeded to deliberate on the design of a Vision Statement, A Mission Statement and Core Values for all civil services of the Union and the states. Their presentations were later discussed in the full assembly. The facilitators were amazed at the participants' depth of understanding, versatility and idealism. What emerged

from the three formulations was a near uniformity of the notion of service to the people.

Their formulations are given in the *appendix*.

We have tried to bring out the best from the essence of the three formulations to generate the following draft for your consideration.

We will be happy to receive comments.

-Prabhat Kumar

## ***Appendix***

### ***Civil Services of India***

#### ***Vision***

***We, the Indian civil servants, pledge to deliver matchless public services to our citizens efficiently and ethically, with responsiveness and innovation. We pledge to be absolutely upright, fearless and unbiased in our conduct.***

#### ***Mission***

***The civil service will be a great place to work. We will promote a movement:***

***To be acknowledged as the main repository of knowledge and skills relating to all subjects of public governance;***

***To be recognized for our ability to implement the policies and programmes of the government efficiently and ethically; and***

***To be perceived as people friendly and helpers of the weak and less privileged.***

#### ***Core Values***

***Sense of justice and equity***

***Objectivity in decision making***

***Commitment to serve the people***

***Transparency in conduct and action***

***Absolute incorruptibility***

**(Annexure)**

## **Envisioning the civil service of India**

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Entering the precincts of the premier training institution for higher civil services, one's attention is drawn to the Vision of the Academy engraved on a stone slab placed prominently in its front lawns. The vision reads as: we seek to promote good governance, by providing quality training towards building a professional and responsive civil service in a caring, ethical and transparent framework. Curiously, the vision of the National Academy of Administration incorporates the desired boundaries of the civil service. However, in the last six and a half decades since independence, no one has bothered to develop a vision for the civil service.

The Core Group of IC CfG is in the process of developing a discussion paper on the Vision of the Indian Civil Service. In this process, it has deliberated on the spirit and content of a possible Vision Statement a number of times. It has addressed the desirability and utility of a vision. Some alternative drafts have also been suggested.

In the beginning, A few questions need to be examined and answered.

### **What is a vision?**

As defined by Chamber's Twentieth Century Dictionary, a vision means quite simply '*a pleasing imaginative plan for, or anticipation of, future events*'. In that sense, it could be a fantasy, an apparition, a revelation, a vivid concept or mental picture. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines it as '*a thing or an idea perceived vividly in the imagination, a statesmanlike foresight*'.

In most situations and organizations, a vision is developed to force change from an unsatisfactory position to a more desirable one. It describes the future shape of things that is expected to fulfil the aspirations of the organization.

In order to make a vision into a feasible future event, it has to fit into the present. It has to be justifiable from the present situation not an unattainable fantasy. Otherwise it is condemned right from the beginning to be a meaningless paper exercise. Therefore, the vision should represent a 'created future' consistent with the present, a future that is otherwise not going to happen. The constituents of the vision should be able to stand in the

'created future', look back at the present from there and test the feasibility of occurrence of the 'created future'.

The vision statement needs to be clear and free from any ambiguities. It should be an inspiring dream that is shared by all the constituents of the community to which the vision applies. It should be a common dream and not imposed from above. It should be emotionally logical and logically emotional. All the constituents should be motivated to accept it and to make it happen within a foreseeable time frame. It should be ambitious but not over ambitious.

The vision should be able to motivate all members of the civil service to adhere to the realization of the 'created future'. It should be learnt by heart and reiterated constantly. Any deviation from it should attract attention and consequent correction. Peer pressure should be adequate to ensure compliance with the spirit of the vision.

It is to be noted that the vision should be clearly spelt out without leaving any room for ambiguity. Every word of the vision statement should have a distinct meaning. A vision statement for an organization focuses on the potential inherent in the organization's future, or what they intend to be.

The statement should not have any overhang of the policies of the state. We should remember that the civil services are themselves creatures of state policy. We owe their origin and sustenance on account of decisions taken by the government. We do not determine policies.

Writing a good vision statement isn't difficult. Think about what your organization does and what, in an ideal world, you would like it to do and how you would like to appear to the outside world. Consider the services and attributes that your constituents provide, then imagine how it would be if you provided the very best version of them possible. List those visions, and incorporate them into a brief statement that gives a good overview of the kind of image you want to represent. Understanding your goals and being able to state them clearly is the first step toward making them happen.

Purpose, Business and Value are the three most important components of a vision statement. Therefore, they should receive the greatest attention while expressing the vision. For example, the vision statement of Toyota Company reads as "Toyota will lead the way to the future of mobility enriching lives around the world with the safest and most responsible ways of moving people"

(Purpose 'Enriching life', Business 'mobility', Value 'responsibility')

Similarly, the vision of Apple is "Committed to bring in the best personal computing experience to students, educators, creative professionals, and consumers around the world through innovative hardware, software, and internet offerings"

(Purpose: Computing experience, Business: Hardware, software, network offerings, Value: Commitment and innovation)

A vision statement for an organization focuses on the potential inherent in its future, or what it intends to be. Vision statements are a challenge for many people because they aren't sure what form the statement is supposed to take.

### **Who are the civil services?**

Civil services, by their definition, are part of the Executive under the Constitution. The civil servants are, therefore, enjoined to perform two important tasks; to tender advice to the political executive and to implement the decisions of the political executive in the best possible manner. The Constitutional provisions regarding the civil services are contained in Articles 309-312.

Firstly, we should ponder on what we mean by the Civil Service. It must be kept in mind that the civil services in India are not a homogeneous lot. There are hundreds of organized civil service cadres in the country. There are the higher class one civil services of the Union and the All India Services whose members have been appointed by Government of India on the basis of competitive examination conducted by the Union Public Service Commission. They man the highest positions in the various departments of the Central government as well as in the states.

The All India Services (IAS, IPS and IFS) are governed by the provisions of the All India Services Act. At present, there is no statute for the other services. They constitute a miniscule percentage of the total number of civil servants though they have prominence disproportionate to their numbers.

Then there are other subordinate services whose members are selected by the Subordinate Service Commission of Government of India. These officers handle the work of the various departments of the Central government under the supervision of the above mentioned higher civil services.

In addition to the Central government employees, each state government appoints persons to manage its own departments. The field officials of the states are entrusted with the work at the district and sub district levels.

The members of different central and state services are subject to the rules of their service.

Thus, there could be three concepts of homogeneity of the civil services;

1. The generic definition of all civil services i.e. giving advice and carrying out the decisions of the political executive,
2. The Appointing Authority, the mode of appointment and service rules, and
3. Common examination pertaining to the recruitment to certain Services.

It is to be considered whether the proposed vision should cover all civil services of the Union and the States or should be confined to a set of services or to one particular Service.

In my view, if we have different vision for each Service, it would defeat the very purpose of inspiring the unity of the civil services and would be limited to having a motto for each Service depending on its area of operation.

On the other hand, if we contemplate a common vision for all Services of the Union and the States, it would be very difficult to bind them with a common thread, because there could be contradictions in their respective perspectives and perceptions. But if the real vision of the civil service is to be realized, the whole mass of civil servants will have to contribute to the effort and share the vision. The civil servants occupy a crucial position in the executive pillar of the State contributing to policy making at the national and state levels as well as implementing the policies at different levels of administration. It should, therefore, be the endeavour of the leaders of civil service to bind all the civil servants belonging to different services and working at different levels in bureaucracy in a single bond of brotherhood.

### **Where are the civil services today?**

The third aspect to deliberate on is what the present state of the civil services is. In my view, there are two parts of answering the question;

1. What do they think of themselves, and
2. What do others think of them?

Without going into the popular perceptions about the role and performance of civil services (which incidentally are not very flattering), it should suffice to say that the Services themselves are not satisfied with the present state of affairs. It is their general perception that they are capable of much better performance. They view the current situation of governance as being sub-optimal, though their overall contribution to maintaining the stability of the Nation and sanity of the system of governance remains highly commendable. They are also of the view that their worth is not properly evaluated by the politicians, social thinkers, civil society and the media.

On the other hand, the citizens find the performance of civil servants deficient in the delivery of services promised by the governments. The popular perception, though somewhat misplaced, of a typical civil servant is that he is inefficient, insensitive and often corrupt.

### **Where do the civil services want to go?**

The next issue relates to the goals to be achieved by the civil services at a future date as well as the self-image to be realized by them. These should constitute the essence of the vision statement.

The usual way of putting the goals is to enumerate the constitutional role and desirable characteristics of an ideal civil servant. One of the ways in which the civil services need to be recognized by the people can be summarized in the following;

*To be acknowledged as the main repository of knowledge and skills relating to all subjects of governance,*

*To be recognized for their ability to deliver services and implement the policies and programmes of the government efficiently and honestly,*

*To be seen as capable of working with other stakeholders including the civil society, and*

*To be perceived as people friendly and helpers of the weak and less privileged.*

The Botswana Civil Service Vision presents a detailed examination of the elements of a vision. It summarizes the vision statement as:

*“We, the Botswana Public Service, will provide a world class service that is efficient, effective, caring and responsive to local and global challenges”.*

The statement of mission, vision and core values of the Singaporean civil service says:

*Our corporate mission*

*We work with the elected government to shape Singapore’s future, forge a common vision among Singaporeans and transform the vision into reality.*

*We safeguard the independence, sovereignty, security and prosperity of Singapore.*

*We uphold justice and equality, guided by the principles of incorruptibility, meritocracy and impartiality.*

*Our goals*

*We build a dynamic, successful and vibrant nation of excellence with a safe, secure and stable environment.*

*We create the best conditions for Singapore to succeed and for Singaporeans to attain high standards of living.*

*We foster a cohesive and harmonious society based on respect, care and concern for fellow citizens.*

### **Visioning exercise for the civil services of India**

In the context of the Indian civil service, the issue was put to confabulation in the Core Group of the IC Centre for Governance. Some of the formulations suggested by the members of the Core Group are summarized below.

*‘An important factor is service of the people, service of the masses, service of the common man, wiping the tears from every eye, being helpful to the last person in society.*

*Another area is efficiency, to be perfect, to achieve excellence, to be world class.*

*Then we have service of the country, raising India to super power status. Make India prosperous. Raise the GDP. Raise the indicators of social development, raising the happiness index.’*

*“Zero tolerance to corruption and total compliance with ethical behaviour and integrity.”*

*‘To develop a civil service that is professionally sound with highly competent and qualified personnel, performance oriented, effective in service delivery, accountable, fostering enduring partnership with all stakeholders, and capable of meeting the challenges of twenty-first century globalized world, by way of creating a conducive environment for sustainable growth and development, shared by all the people of India.’*

*'Doing work to perfection and striving for equanimity of mind in work and life by working for the good of the society'.*

A member enumerated four aspects of the vision viz. service to the people, relationship with the political executive, relationship with other services and relationship with non-governmental organizations as essential features. He has designed the vision statement as:

*'The civil service, in conjunction with other wings of the public service, would ensure the continued progress of the people towards a life in which they can have a sense of self satisfaction while leading a life free of wants and fear'.*

*'To develop a highly trained, professionally sound and politically neutral, public Service, who are accountable and transparent in their professional dealings, maintaining highest standards of professional ethics, ensuring prompt delivery of services to the people-at-large, being 'sensitive' to the needs of the common man, as also ensuring 'justice, liberty and equality' to all citizens, as enshrined in the Preamble to the Constitution of India, both in Letter and spirit '.*

*'To develop a highly trained , professionally sound, politically neutral, and a very sensitive public service, who are accountable and transparent , in their professional dealings, maintaining highest standards of professional ethics, ensuring prompt delivery of services to the people-at-large, as also ensuring justice, liberty and equality to all citizens, as enshrined in the Constitution - both in Letter and spirit.'*

*'We, the civil servants of India, aspire incessantly to be the best in class as politically neutral agents of economic, social and environmental change in a global context.'*

*We, the members of Civil Services of India, resolve to commit ourselves to serve the people of our nation by providing an ethical, honest, professionally sound, accountable, humane and truly participative system of governance'*

Another formulation was:

*'We shall redeem our pledge of being world's best civil service with highest standards of efficiency, integrity, authenticity, objectivity and the spirit of public service. We shall do our job fearlessly. For us, the country shall come first, always and every time.'*

Each of the above mentioned formulations is a legitimate rendering of where the civil services want to reach. The question is how best to project the most desirable future for the civil Services, the future not being too distant a future but in a timeframe within the horizons of the present serving civil servants.

The Vision Group finalized the following



*'We resolve to convert civil services into a cohesive, honest, highly professional group providing India with a truly participative system of governance that will wipe the tears from every eye.'*

## **Conclusion**

Vision is the 'created' future shape of the organization. It is the ideal of what the organization should be in the future. Having a vision gives a meaning to the members of the organization as well as to other stakeholders a cause which binds them. For example, the vision of the armed forces of a country persuades them to lay down their lives for the country. Vision provides them that cause. Vision is a permanent statement of the organization and does not change from time to time unless the organization itself is transformed.

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The elements of an effective vision statement are as follows:

- \*Should be understood clearly by all members and other stakeholders
- \*Should be short and have a sharp point
- \*Should define the destination only
- \*Should excite the members and provide them a binding force
- \*Should be so challenging as to force members to stretch their capacity beyond normal limits

The vision making exercise has to be intensely iterative. We cannot start with the best statement. It has to be generated in consultation with all concerned. Therefore, the attempt of IC Centre for Governance is merely to start the dialogue. The issue would be posed to the associations, groups and training academies for their consideration. The final vision statement adopted by the civil services would, in all probability, be quite different from the one drafted by the IC Centre.

