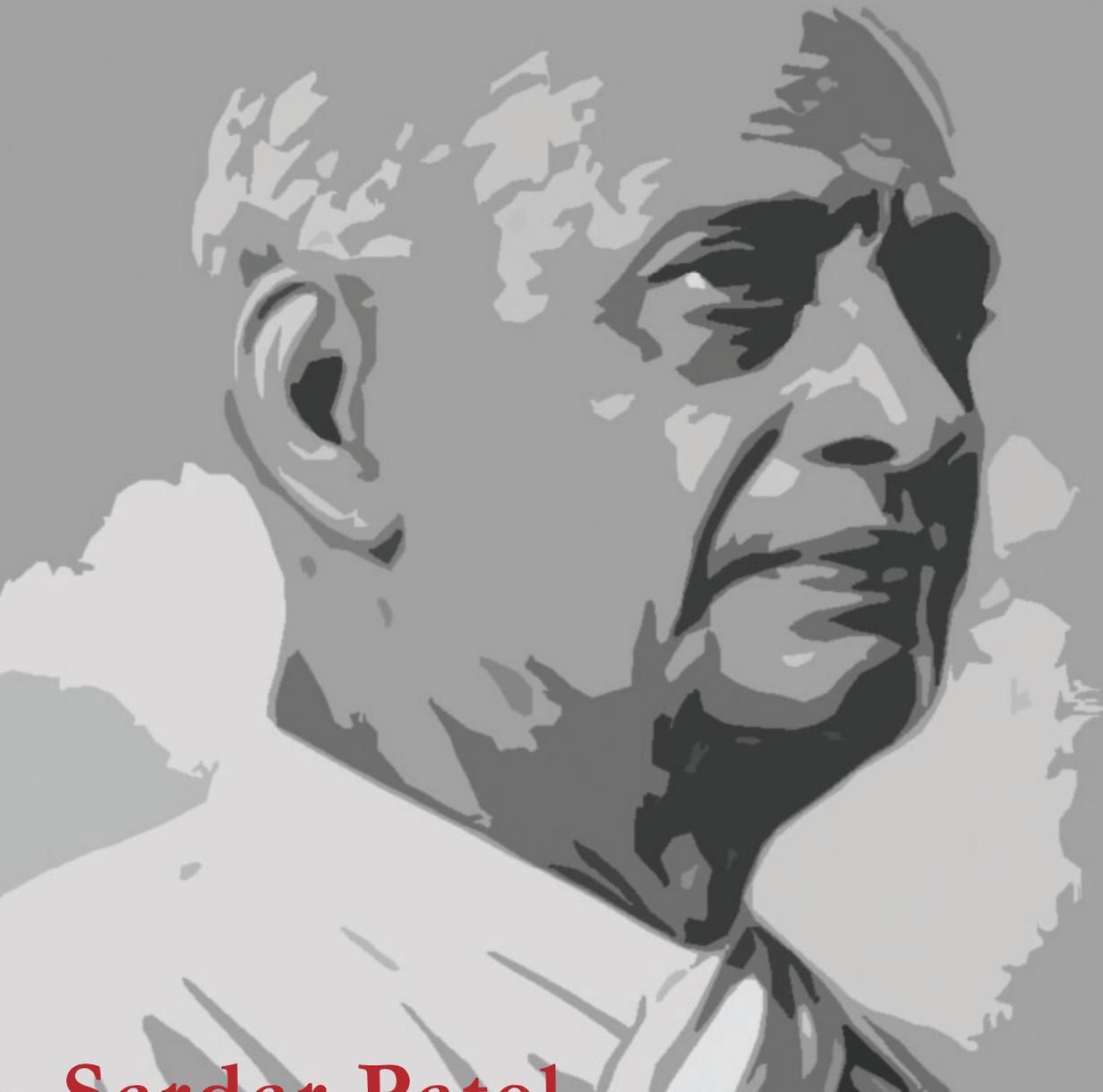




IC Centre for Governance



Sardar Patel
Lecture on Governance

November 17, 2023 | New Delhi

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IC Centre for Governance

The IC Centre for Governance has been set up with the objective of collective thinking and acting on important issues of governance. It believes that public governance is too serious a matter to be left entirely to the state and that the involvement of the Civil Society is not only desirable but also essential. The Centre seeks to strengthen the capacity of Civil Society and government for ensuring good governance.

Read more about the Centre at <https://www.iccfg.net/>

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Dr. Karan Singh

Statesman, Philosopher & Thinker

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About the Lecture

“In a tough time the cowards find excuses, the brave people find the way”.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel

In every programme on *Ethics in Governance* conducted by IC Centre for Governance since 2005, the participating members of the All India Services are being reminded of the stirring words and inspiring actions of Sardar Patel, the tallest among nation builders of India. His address to the first batch of the Indian Administrative Services is circulated to them to act as a veritable guide in their career.

Sardar Patel was a true nationalist, who placed the interests of the country above everything else. Nothing else except the country mattered to him. It would be apt to describe him as the unifier of India and what was achieved by him during the turbulent days of partition remains unparalleled in modern history.

In our view, it is necessary to reiterate the work and principles of the Sardar—loyalty to the motherland, unshakeable commitment to nationalism and unflinching service to the Nation – so that the new generations do not forget the great legacy.

The Centre has, therefore, decided to pay its humble tribute to the great leader by institutionalizing an annual lecture on the theme of Governance in his name. This small initiative is aimed at keeping his fire of nationalism alive in our hearts and reiterating his principles of governance to motivate those in government and those who observe the governments from outside.

The first ICCfG Sardar Patel Lecture on Governance was delivered by Shri M Venkaiah Naidu, the Vice President of India on 24 January 2020. The second lecture was delivered by Dr. K. Kasturirangan, Former Chairman, ISRO, MP (Rajya Sabha) on February 19, 2022. The third lecture was delivered by Shri Arif Mohammed Khan, Governor of Kerala on October 31, 2022. The fourth lecture was delivered by Dr. Karan Singh, Statesman, Philosopher & Thinker on November 17, 2023.

Prabhat Kumar
President, IC Centre for Governance

INTRODUCTION

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. Welcome Mr. Vohra to your own home here. We are really privileged to have Dr. Karan Singh as the speaker for the Sardar Patel Lecture today in the India International Centre. I started to work with him when he was President, and I was appointed as the Director General of ICCR in 2010. There was one person who was, even at that time, described as the best President that India never had. But if India didn't have the best person as the president, ICCR certainly did have the best person at that time as the President. Besides him, we have Professor Syed Shahid Mahdi who was a Vice President then. It was really a privilege for me at that time to work under two scholars and truly at that time, the ICCR was an organization headed by scholars, statesmen, thinkers who had great ideas. The first thing that you find when you talk to Dr. Karan Singh even for the first time was that there are very few others anywhere whom you might have met who would have an idea, who would understand and know Indian culture and civilization the way he does. Basically, it is not just because he is so well read; he's well read but I think the understanding that has developed over a period of so many years, the way he feels for India truly in that sense, I found that Dr. Karan Singh understood India, felt for India and in that sense, he understood the idea of India in a true sense. Therefore, I would say that right from the beginning, we know the history. I am not going to read the bio-data. We all know it. Right from 1947 onwards and even prior to that, he was part of the Indian freedom movement, India's independence struggle. Coming from the kind of lineage that he did, he was practically one with the Indian leadership of that time — pre-independence and post-independence India. Therefore, again to understand what India has gone through at different times, during those different eras and if we have to talk about Patel, if we have

to talk about Nehru, I don't think there can be a better person than Dr. Karan Singh or Maharajaji who really understands better the convulsions that India went through before independence, the kind of changes that India went through and there was a philosophy of what India should be. It was not just an ideology. Many people called socialist liberals this and that. There are different labels attached. But I think very few people understand that India is an idea, what it means for the people and how to achieve that. Therefore, I really don't think there can be a better person than Dr. Karan Singh who can speak or who can deliver this Patel lecture. I now request Mr. Prabhat Kumar, President of ICCfG to kindly give his address.

Suresh K. Goel

Former Director General, ICCR

Welcom Address - Shri Prabhat Kumar



Respected Dr. Karan Singh, Shri Shahid Mahdi, Shri Mahesh Kapoor, Ambassador Suresh Goel, dignitaries in the audience, ladies and gentlemen. The IC Centre for Governance in collaboration with the India International Centre is privileged to present this Fourth Sardar Patel Lecture on Governance. We are very grateful to Dr. Karan Singh for accepting our request and I welcome all to this signal lecture. As we all know, governance and government are two concepts which are used interchangeably but obviously, there's a marked distinction between the two. While government is an institution which has the authority to make rules and laws and policies and to enforce them, governance is a much wider concept which includes the institutions, the rules and various actors. It incorporates the government as well as other actors like the civil society, the private sector and the international organizations. In other words, we can say that government is the *who* of governance and governance is the *how* of governing.

A lot has been said and is being said and written about governance but I think there are some new trends and movements which are calling for a deeper public discourse on the governance of the future. For example, we have the rise of citizen activism because of the explosion of information and the breakdown of asymmetry between the government and the people. A large number of people are now engaging themselves in political thought and that is why it calls for a new look at the governance. It is making new demands on governance. Similarly, the other movements which are being led generally by the young people across the globe focus on subjects like climate change, economic inequality, social justice and corruption. We also have a new creature called the identity politics; the identity politics which is based on people's identities, race, ethnicity, gender, class, caste, language. They are also making their demands on governance and that is why I say that all these trends should be factored into the study of governance. We also have the entry of technology in governance. In fact, I always say that the big tech is poised to gatecrash into the area of governance and I don't know what the consequences will be.

Friends, the IC Centre for Governance was set up 20 years ago with the objective of collective thinking on issues of governance. The centre has been doing this for the last two decades. It has discovered in the process and developed the notion of ethical governance as a ruling paradigm for Vision 2047. We have also started this series of lectures in the name of Sardar Patel. Three eminent speakers, three eminent thinkers have already shared their perspectives on governance with us and I don't think it will be out of place to recall some of the thoughts expressed by them during these lectures.

In the **first lecture**, the **then Vice President Shri Venkaiah Naidu** said that the discourse on governance has grown as a parallel discourse to the civil society, human rights, globalization. It also provides institutional and legal interfaces through which citizens mediate and interact with the state and seek accountability. A just people- centred and inclusive growth seeks to transform political and governance process.

In the **second lecture**, the **thinker scientist, Dr. K Kasturirangan** said for governance practices which need to address multi-stakeholder interests and interrelation among cost, schedule and performance for evaluation of the impact of midcourse correction, configuration management techniques are highly relevant.

In the **third lecture**, the **scholar politician Arif Mohammad Khan** said if you want to be in public life, then our tradition tells us that it is in politics that the highest form of renunciation is expected. One should be ready to make supreme sacrifice. Unless you have found something, a cause which you consider greater than yourselves, there is no reason why you should enter the public life. I think I should stop here and I request my friend Shahid Mahdi to deliver his Chairman's comments. Thank you.

Presidential Address - Shri Syed Shahid Mahdi



It is a privilege to be sitting next to my patron Dr. Karan Singh. I had the privilege of working under him and I still wonder why he selected me for the Vice Presidentship of Indian Council for Cultural Relations. Dr. Karan Singh, Urdu being my mother tongue, I cannot restrain myself by quoting a couplet from Mir Taqi Mir who was much senior to Ghalib.

मत सहल हमें जानो फिरता है फ़लक बरसों
तब खाक के पर्दे से इंसान निकलते हैं

I have always imagined Dr. Karan Singh whenever I heard this couplet. I consider it a privilege to be in the same age as Dr. Karan Singh. I don't know why but since that day, when he nominated me for the post of vice presidentship of ICCR, I rose in my own esteem. There was a mention of identity politics. I believe we need to differentiate between two things – identity and identity politics. It is very

important to have an identity. Identity means that you are the heir of your entire cultural heritage, historical heritage and the distinctions therein. But questioning the identities of others and disturbing harmony by using identity as an excuse is a different thing. My identity is different in terms of race, heritage and language but if that identity causes conflict, then I think we need to break free from this identity. Especially, the part of the globe we live in, where many identities came and got merged or got changed or influenced each other, I think this is what our real identity is that we do not have a single identity and the same cannot be said about several countries. I think geographically or historically, this privilege rarely exists in any other part of the globe where multiple identities sprang up, interacted and sometimes clashed with each other before learning to co-exist, which later gave birth to a culture that was unique. I feel it is should be the duty of all of us to protect our identities, nurture them but at the same time, avoid the conflict of identity politics.

What can I say about Dr. Karan Singh? I had the privilege of working under him for some time but I never understood why he chose me for the post of Vice-President. However, there are many favours bestowed on me at times that are apparently not merited. I consider it to be my good fortune.

I had the privilege of working under him for a couple of years. I can't say that I have seen him closely because he's such a multi-dimensional person that nobody should claim so much intimacy with him. He is the embodiment of grace and I feel very, very honoured and privileged sitting next to him. I am sure you are not expecting any substantive talk from me because we are all waiting to hear respected Dr. Karan Singh. Thank you very much for making me a part of this. Thank you very much.

Chief Guest Address - Dr. Karan Singh



President of this evening's function, my friend and colleague Shri Shahid Mahdi who is being very modest. In many spheres his experience is much greater than mine, and I gained a great deal by having him at my side during my Presidentship of ICCR, Shri Prabhat Kumar, who is the President of IC Centre for Governance, a distinguished civil servant, Shri Suresh Goel who also worked with me in the ICCR, I almost feel as if I am back in the ICCR today; Shri N N Vohra is here, he is the person who wrote the Vohra Committee Report on the relationship between criminals and politicians; he spent all his life in governance. We worked together in India International Centre and between us, we built the annexe. After that, he worked with prime ministers and he looked after my state for 8 years. He has vast experience, and I am very glad that he is here. Many other friends and colleagues in the audience whom I cannot all mention, members of the press and electronic media.

Three remarkable men dominated the last phase of our freedom struggle – Mahatma Gandhi, who provided the spiritual and moral leadership; Jawaharlal Nehru, the revolutionary visionary mass leader and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the statesman, administrator, and consolidator. There were many others, of course. There was Dr. Rajendra Prasad, C Rajagopalachari, Maulana Azad and so on, but these three people, I think, were in a class of their own and they played a major role throughout their lives but particularly towards the end of the freedom movement and its success.

Sardar Patel, as you know, joined Mahatma Gandhi in 1917 and from then he got involved in a series of satyagrahas which was Gandhi's major weapon in the freedom struggle; a very unique weapon which he perfected. The Champaran Satyagraha of 1917 was the first satyagraha movement led by Mahatma Gandhi in British India which was for the Indigo workers striking for recognition. There was also the Bardoli Satyagraha led by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in 1928 which was a farmers' agitation against the increased taxation of farmers by the colonial government. That was a very successful satyagraha because their demands were largely conceded and it was from that satyagraha that he earned the title of *Sardar*. The people began calling him *Sardar* because he was leading that agitation in a very brilliant manner. The appellation *Sardar* stayed with him for the rest of his life, and he has come down to us as the great *Sardar*. He was a great administrator and he rose to be President of the Congress in 1931.

Sardar's role was of critical importance during the freedom movement. Our freedom was a great achievement; no doubt, a unique achievement. But let us never forget that we paid the price for the partition. We may not have been violent against the British, but the sort of violence we had against each other, particularly with the partition of Punjab and Bengal, was horrific. At least a million people must have been killed; maybe, 10 million people uprooted in the largest mass migration in history. At that time, it was two men who really steadied the ship of state – Jawaharlal Nehru as the Prime Minister and Sardar Patel as the Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister. Those were the two men who held the state together. I do not think, many of you would remember those days, but I have I have lived through them. I am older than the Indian Republic and I am not too overawed by the birth of the republic. I have lived through those periods. You cannot imagine what sort of chaos there was. Delhi itself was a massive refugee camp. Kingsway camp that we hear about were all actual camps. There were lakhs of refugees

pouring in from the Punjab with horrific stories.

Churchill had said that *India is no more a united nation than the Equator* and that once we go India will shatter into 20 bits. Indeed we might have if these two men had not at that time been in charge. People tend to forget the challenges in the euphoria of freedom. Let us not forget the challenges of partition. I always stress this because people did give sacrifices in the partition. There were lots of killings in the partition. That was a very difficult time and despite differences in their temperaments, Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel worked closely together at that juncture and they led the new nation to overcome that crisis.

The main historic achievement of the Sardar, of course, apart from administering the country after partition, was the integration of the Indian states. That is a very interesting story. Most people do not make a distinction between accession and integration. Accession was one thing, that was signing the Instrument of Accession like my father did for J&K. Integration was another thing, when all the states were integrated with the rest of the country. The peaceful integration of the Indian states is, I think, a unique example in world history. I do not think you will find anywhere in the world a situation where 600 different states with different structures and rulers were all peacefully integrated into the new Indian Union. That is a very great achievement and as Mahatma Gandhi said, “The task of dealing with the Princes was formidable. But I am convinced that the Sardar was the ONLY MAN who could have coped with it”.

Each state had different administrations and structures. How they were integrated into the rest of the country was a very remarkable achievement. And I must mention V.P. Menon who was the Sardar’s right hand man for this project. I also would like to point out that we tend to disregard the patriotism of the Princes, they also gave up their states willingly. There were only two or three exceptions and all those proved to be disastrous. The exception of Junagadh, there was war; not a full war but we had to work it out. There was a war in Hyderabad, and in Jammu & Kashmir the war is still continuing. These three apart, all the other states came in absolutely peacefully. That is a truly remarkable achievement and Sardar will go down as the great consolidator of India.

Before I go on to governance, I want to touch on my personal association with the Sardar. He was the Home Minister when, under certain circumstances, my father was requested to leave the state. It was a painful incident; my father and my mother both had to leave because Quaid-e-Azam Sher-E-Kashmir

Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah who was calling the shots insisted that he could not win the plebiscite as long as Maharaja Hari Singh and Maharani Tara Devi were there. He said the Maharani was more dangerous than the Maharaja. The Maharaja only sits in his court surrounded by his minions, but she is the one who goes out to the refugee camps and gives away clothes. My mother was not a princess, she was a village girl from Kangra and therefore, she was aware of the conditions of the poor. She felt deeply for the poor.

Sardar Patel was the one who we dealt with it at that time. He, as it were, facilitated this change and also along with that, my appointment as Regent of Jammu and Kashmir. When my father left, they had to fill the vacuum and so I became Regent of Jammu and Kashmir at the age of 18. But even before that, I had developed trouble with my hip when I was about 16 and I was on a wheelchair for 18 months, unable to even turn without help. Sardar Patel came to Jammu in December and he asked why I was in a wheelchair. My father said that for six months they had been trying but my immobilized hip was not getting any better. He advised my father to send me to America and asked him to immediately make all the necessary arrangements. He said that if I was not sent to America now, I would remain on a wheel chair my entire life. Immediately, arrangements were made. I was sent to America and on the 31st of December 1947 midnight, the ambulance took me from the airport into the hospital in New York where I spent over a year.

I am very grateful to the Sardar. Had he not insisted, I do not think my parents would have sent me. I was the only son, the only child but Sardar put his foot down and asked them to immediately send me to America. I am personally deeply indebted to him for enabling me to walk again, and that was 76 years ago. I am now 92. It is thanks to him that I am getting around. Otherwise, I may really have been a cripple all my life.

I then had the privilege of being his guest in Dehradun. He lived in that beautiful dak bungalow in Dehradun with a huge garden and before I came to the state as Regent, he invited me to be his guest for a fortnight in Dehradun. He was very ill at the time in the middle of 1949, but his daughter, Maniben was with him and she used to look after him very well. He used to sometimes invite me in the evenings which was such a privilege for me. He used to give his own views on various matters. He extended his personal hospitality to me. I think this gesture was because he wanted to reassure me as I was a very young person. I had just turned 17. I think it was very gracious of him to have done that, and as

I said, I would like to pay my homage to his memory and my personal gratitude for what he did for me.

If I may now come on to governance. The Sardar left the structure that the British had built up more or less untouched, the so-called steel frame, because there was some view at that time that the IAS should be abolished. He said nothing doing, if we do not have a civil service the union will not survive. He was very clear of the importance of the Civil Service in keeping the country united. Therefore all attempts to break the civil services failed.

Of course so many committees have been made since then and the whole world has changed tremendously. But in the early period it was very important that he should support civil services. In fact, many services had to be rebuilt from the beginning. The Foreign Service, for example, Jawaharlal Nehru had to create a whole new Service. In administrative services, I remember, there were some very competent and able people like Girija Shankar Bajpai, N R Pillai and others, but there were also many gaps that needed to be filled. The Sardar didn't live very much longer, he passed away in December of 1950 but in the three years that he was there after independence he did help a lot in stabilizing the administration.

Identity politics, I think, is very interesting and I thought I would briefly touch upon a number of points in the light of my own experience. There used to be some talk, if you remember, of a casteless society. I think it was Dr. Ambedkar of all people who spoke of a casteless society. But now, there is no one left out, all the castes that existed, visible and invisible, have all been now given reservations. You cannot have a casteless society with reservations; that is a contradiction in terms. I am not against reservations. I know particularly the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes who have been misused and exploited for centuries, need special attention. But once you have reservations, then where are you going to stop? We are not stopping we are not stopping with what the Constitution said. We are going beyond that now. We have a new caste census. We are bringing other OBCs and others into the picture. I think we are going to end up with all 100% of people reserved in one way or the other. You will not find anyone unreserved. That is the logical conclusion of what we are doing. This is something which is very interesting. All this talk of a casteless society is totally ridiculous at a time when we are, in fact, increasing and strengthening the various divisions within Hindu society.

A number of points were sent to me by the IC Centre of Governance to talk about. One was about divergence. We were talking here of ideological polarization. One of the problems a civil servant has to face is when there is such a sharp polarization in the political field that they are often caught; particularly if the centre is one party and the state is a different party. Then they are in a very awkward position because on the one hand, they are part of an all India service and therefore, they come under the home Ministry, on the other, they are serving a state which has a different government and a different ideology. I think this is an interesting and unique problem that India faces. This problem of divergence of ideology is something which civil servants have to cope with.

Let me say that I was in Parliament for 40 years. It is very good that we have a multiparty system and have all shades of public opinion reflected. That is a great boon, but the sort of violence and anger that I see now in our political system is very unfortunate. You can differ, there are lots of differences and of course you have to differ. Democracy involves differences. If you do not have differences, you can't have a democracy. But the foul language that is being used, the way people speak in Parliament and outside Parliament, they call each other names, is disturbing. As said in my farewell speech in the Rajya Sabha घट-घट में तोरे साईं बसत हैं, कटु वचन मत बोल रे। (The Divine resides everywhere, so do not use bitter language at all). There is so much bitterness in our lives that it is distorting our entire democratic system and our system of governance. I have to put on the table that I am all for ideological divergence, and we have the whole spectrum from the CPM all the way to the other side. But we must not get into this very violent verbal abuse. When you have verbal violence, ultimately sooner or later physical violence follows automatically, not at the top but among the followers. That is something which I deplore very strongly and that puts the civil servant in an impossible position. I am talking of governance. The civil servant gets into a great dilemma as to whom he should be answerable to. It would either make the state government or the national govt. angry. We have got to develop a certain special immunity to that sort of a problem.

Secondly, complexity; administration is becoming much more complex. Earlier it was simply Deputy Commissioner going around and looking at the revenue records. Although, I must say to the credit of the British officers that every Deputy Commissioner had to travel in their district for 3 weeks on horseback. It was not that they used to sit in their offices, they had to write

detailed reports. That's why we have all these reports. I do not think that happens nowadays. It was quite a different thing then. How complexity has increased because it was not simply the revenue records that was supposed to be the basis of our administration but now you have multiple programmes. You have programmes for the backward communities; you have programmes for family planning, for welfare, for the poor. You have a number of economic and socio-economic programmes which involve a lot of governance, a lot of administration to see that they are not misused because vast sums of money go from the centre and it is the job of the administration to see that it gets to the last woman or the last man and does not get hijacked in the process. The world itself is becoming much more complex than before and this complexity is going to continue. I think as the world is progressing, it is becoming more and more complex. I will mention a little later about how technology is coming into the picture and civil servants now have got to be very aware of the complexities of these new dimensions. As you said, the old dimensions by themselves are not enough.

Then there is the problem of violence. The Vohra report is a landmark report. I suggest anybody who wants to really study administration has to study his report which clearly points out the nexus between politicians and criminals. If our politicians have a nexus with criminals, what will be the fate of democracy? You cannot eliminate politicians because you cannot have democracy without elections, you cannot have elections without politicians. The politicians are there and if they are in touch with criminal forces, then what governance will there be, whether it is the mining mafias or the timber mafias or coal mafias or whatever. All of you read about them in the papers every day.

The criminal nexus is really very disturbing and that also goes back to the high cost of elections. I would like to ask you, I myself have been in Parliament as I said. Nowadays, I understand, in order to get a ticket, you have got to spend a crore at least, forget about fighting the elections. To get a ticket itself, you have got to spend vast sums of money. I am not talking of any particular party. I am making a general statement. Where will that money come from? That money will ultimately only come from the mafias. Are the mafias becoming a necessary instrument in our democracy? I urge that you think about these problems. The IC Centre for Governance is an organization set up to think about these problems. That nexus has to be broken but how?



I am not going into the whole financial governance. That's a world of its own. How much you should tax and how you should tax and all that is not an area in which I have any particular knowledge. But information, the Right to Information Act I think was a very interesting and a very progressive measure. However, personally, I strongly disapprove of making files available to the public along with notings which is what is happening now. If every deputy secretary has to worry about what he has written to avoid a notice by the Enforcement Directorate 20 years later, asking why he had written such a note, it is a disturbing feature. Why show government files to the public? I am sorry; information is all very fine, but I think you can overdo it and as somebody who has been in the government myself, I would be very unhappy if the files become public. In the files, as a minister, you expect the civil servants to give their frank views whether you start from the under secretary, the deputy secretary, the joint secretary or the secretary in the hierarchy ladder. But if the files are going to go to the public, who will give their frank views?

I was shocked to learn that now the files are made public. I must say personally I do not approve of that. We are very proud of the Right to Information, for which legislation was brought in during the period of Congress rule, but I am afraid we are overdoing it if we are showing the files to the public. The public can know the decision but they should not know the processes of coming to a decision. I may be old-fashioned, but this total nudity should not be there; we must maintain some amount of secrecy and not make everything public.

Coming now to technology, the advent of artificial intelligence (AI) has changed the whole picture of the world. You can see in just one year, it started last November, how much the world has changed. Every day you read articles, you see television programmes about artificial intelligence and what it can do. They can put me on the screen and say that I said this and that, but it may not be me at all; maybe it is somebody else. It is becoming too much. Technology is beginning to create problems now. Whenever you go beyond a certain limit, as it is said in Sanskrit, अति वर्जयेत्, excess everywhere is forbidden and has to be avoided. There is too much information available and no one knows where technology is headed. Now the experts are saying for God's sake stop. Nobody's going to stop now. Technology is now advancing in its own pace. Please remember it will eat you up if you try to stop it. How do we cope with this technology? We do not even know, in education, for example, whether that essay is written by a student or by the machine. There is no way you can

tell. Muzaffar Ali is here with us. I do not think a machine can write his plays but nonetheless they can write almost everything else. This is something really very disturbing but in a way very exciting because we are entering new fields, untested fields. How do we deal with it? How does it impact our daily lives? How does it impact our governance particularly?

There are no answers to this. I am computer illiterate actually. I am from a pre-computer generation. There were no computers during our times. We depended almost solely on our brains, and we survived reasonably well I think. We did B.A., M.A., Ph.D. and so on. Today, young people can not move without a machine. Even for simple multiplication, they are dependent on machines. But the question remains that a machine cannot take over the human mind. Can a machine write poetry written by Ghalib?

हज़ारों ख़्वाहिशें ऐसी कि हर ख़्वाहिश पे दम निकले
बहुत निकले मेरे अरमान लेकिन फिर भी कम निकले
निकलना खुल्द से आदम का सुनते आए हैं लेकिन
बहुत बे-आबरू होकर तेरे कूचे से हम निकले

They will always be there, but it is very disturbing the mischief that they can do. I have a friend in the audience who comes and teaches me about technology. He introduced me, first, to the iPad and ChatGPT which is something miraculous, but miracles are always double-edged. I do not know how this miracle is going to work out, but I just want to put the point on the table that the exponential growth of technology and in particular of artificial intelligence is going to prove to be the greatest challenge for our administrators.

I touched upon federalism earlier. That we are a federal country is very good because the country is so vast and so varied and every religion has their different cultural backgrounds and languages and arts. But federalism must work properly. You must give the states their due. The tendency to concentrate more and more power in the centre is beginning to dilute the Federalism. This is one of the basic features of the Constitution, but that is something which we have to look into and we must be very careful. And the states in turn, have got to delegate their powers down to the districts from the districts down to the people. Power is something which should not stay concentrated, it should move into the people.

People are now aware of their rights. You go to the farthest tribal village in

India today or the poorest people, they have their rights. They know that they have the right to vote. Nobody is prepared to give up the right to vote. But then, when we are talking of governance the administrative power must go down to the last person. Otherwise, if it remains only in the state headquarters or the capitals, like in Delhi or in Lucknow, what is the advantage to the people unless it is actually taken down to them. Taking the power of administration and using it down to the last man; *Unto This Last* as John Ruskin said, is one of the great challenges of our administrative and governance system.

Then we have got to streamline our governance. Our delays are too much. Sometimes by the time the file moves, I think, Curzon said a very interesting thing as to how in his own stately time to file move around and around like we circumambulate the Sun and it appears again only after a year. This process has to be streamlined in some way. We have got to make this whole process of noting from under secretary to deputy secretary, deputy secretary to joint secretary to additional secretary and so on, quicker. It is a ritual one follows but we must make it quicker and more effective.

I will now come to two items which were not mentioned in the note sent by ICCfG because IAS people do not really like them. In their hearts, the IAS personnel do not welcome lateral entry. They stare at them wondering where they came from when they themselves had to go through the IAS exam. IAS is not a twice born. I agree that the IAS is very important but now you need people who are economists, who are technological experts, who are experts in other fields. Hence, you need lateral entry into the civil services which is stoutly resisted, because they feel they are intruding in their sphere. But particularly with the new world into which we are moving, simply one administrator is no longer enough. You need expertise of all sorts in different ministries. For example, you need agricultural experts in the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, you need technological experts in science and technology. You need experts everywhere and therefore, this lateral entry is something which now has begun in a small way but it has to be accepted. Everybody should accept the fact that whatever they may be, ministers or secretaries, they are not repositories of all wisdom. They must realize their ignorance and always try and learn from the new technologies that are emerging.

This brings me to a very interesting thing that I learnt about recently. Have you heard of reverse mentoring? The kids who have grown up during the age of digital technology are digital natives. Now, there is a process in which you

get young people in and they mentor the elder people. It is a very unique and interesting idea, because what you do is to get in new ideas, fresh ideas which the elderly people, who have done 25-30 years in the IAS may not be able to do. Hence, lateral entry coupled with reverse mentoring, is something which is on the cards and which we have to really look into.

Finally, I would like to talk about a couple of things including Cultural diplomacy which is tremendously important. India's image around the world is crucial. We have everything, we have a great and multifaceted culture, we have language, we have dance, we have music, we that has got to be presented. I recall from my experience in the ICCR that two things that were most in demand, first for yoga and second for Bharatanatyam. This is a worldwide demand. I remember we used to send cultural troupes to our cultural centres abroad. We had as many as 40 cultural centres around the world. Some people who have been directors of our cultural centres are here in the audience. Those cultural centres play a crucial role. People want to know more about India. For example, they want to learn Sanskrit, they want to learn Hindi and they want to learn our dance and our music. Cultural diplomacy is a very important area and requires a special type of governance also. You need to have people who are aware of the cultural dimension and who will, therefore, further that dimension.

Not all ministers do that. Some people may wonder why we are sending out dance troupes and so on. But we not only send out troupes out, but also receive troupes from foreign countries. We had the Russia day in India when I escorted Vladimir Putin to the Siri Fort Auditorium. That was our best auditorium, and I was ashamed to even take him there. He came for the opening and Medvedev came for the closing. I must congratulate Modi Ji for building, for the first time, a world class Convention Centre in Delhi. We had celebrated Years of different Countries. We had the year of China here and then we had a year of India in China. We had year of India in France and then a year of France in India and so on. This is an exciting and interesting dimension of governance, very different from the usual because usually governance is very plebeian but this is something very challenging.

Then, we have a big scholarship programme for foreign students. Administering that is also a problem. We used to get a thousand students from Afghanistan. The issue was where we should accommodate them, which university should we put them into, where would they be comfortable, will they

be looked after, will they be discriminated against. Because unfortunately we have a lot of discrimination in India, mind you, based on colour and African students often complain that they are not given the respect that they deserve. These are all elements of cultural diplomacy about which I can go on for a long time but I think I have already covered quite a lot of areas.

To conclude, governance in a country as large and diverse as India will always be very difficult and challenging. I remember soon after independence, Jawaharlal Nehru used to speak of “the exciting adventure of building a new India”. That adventure is still there. We must have a sense of excitement. We must have a sense of commitment. We need the energy of the young and we need the wisdom of the old. We must combine them. Energy has nothing to do with age. Age is just a number. You have got to have that capacity within.

One must feel pain for the nation and for the poor. Even today, there are millions of people who get drenched in the rain, who sweat in the summer, who shiver in the winter. Even today, we have millions of children who are undernourished and they grow up stunted in body and mind. Is this not a disaster? Is it not a tragedy that after 75 years, we are not able to feed our people? You can criticize China as much as you want, but they have abolished absolute poverty. We do not want a communist regime here to do that. We have got to do it through democracy, but we must get rid of absolute poverty. How can we call ourselves a great nation when you have crores of people who are suffering like this? It is all very fine for us sitting comfortably in our homes and in this beautiful auditorium and speaking about these matters, but have we ever thought about the plight of these people? What is the fate of a poor labourer struggling to make both ends meet? We have got to have a certain empathy about what we are doing. I call upon all those who are connected in governance to develop that sense of empathy that what you are doing is not just a 10 to 5 paid job but you are building a great nation. You must always have that in your mind.

Let me tell you a story of the building of the great Brihadisvara Temple in Thanjavur. Raja Raja Cholan, the greatest Chola Emperor, went out to inspect the work. The first man he met was cutting stone. The Raja asked him what he was doing and he replied that he was cutting stone. He went a little further, there was another man doing exactly the same thing. He replied he was earning a living. The first man was just responding, the second man at least

had something different to say. He went a little further and asked the third man what he was doing. He replied that he was building a great temple. It is a question of attitude. All the three men were doing exactly the same thing. Do you have the attitude that you are building a new India? Even after getting independence after centuries, do we have that kind of a feeling in our hearts or have we now taken it for granted? सारे जहाँ से अच्छा हिंदुस्तान हमारा, हम बुलबुले हैं इसकी ये गुलसिताँ हमारा। This song should be sung in every school every day. I entered public life at the age of 18 and I was in J&K as Head of State for 18 years. Then I said that I was not going to spend the rest of my life in J&K. I wanted to be part of the new India. I wanted to make some contribution towards the new India. Whether I have made a contribution or not is not the point; the point is that was what I wanted to do. That was what impelled me to give up my job there. I remember there was even an offer of a lifetime *Sadr-i-Riyasat* (President). I refused since I felt I had done enough for almost 18 years and now wanted to leave to get involved in the larger India, and not only the larger India, the larger world.

Remember, *बसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्* (VasudhaivaKutumbakam), the world is one family. We talk about family. We have now got to move from BhawaniBharati to BhawaniVasundhara (भवानी भारती से भवानी वसुंधरा), from Mother India to Mother Earth. This is the earth that has supported our race from the slime of the primeval ocean billions of years ago to where we are today. And look at the disgraceful way we have mistreated this earth in the last 100 years or so. We have decimated the forests. We have polluted the air. We have polluted the water, we have polluted the land and now nature is hitting back. You cannot get away with this forever. Now you can see the repercussion there are typhoons, hurricanes, melting of the ice caps and so on. Many island countries are going to disappear now. Thousands of species have disappeared.

We have got to be part of this larger world also and not only of India. We are very proud of India and so we should be, but India is also part of the larger world community. In the ultimate analysis, unless we carry within ourselves some kind of a commitment to building a better world, a better India as part of a better world, we will not be fulfilling our destiny.

I commend the IC Centre for Governance for starting this dialogue on governance and I will end with a Sanskrit Shloka about what we should do. It is a very important shloka which exhorts us to awake and arise and move along

the razor-edged path. It is a difficult path. There are no soft options left now, either for individual or for collective salvation. We have to cross that difficult razor-edged path. Where do we go? We go across that path to build a new India, a new world, a new consciousness. This is what the *Kathopanishad* exhorted us thousands of years ago.

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधन।
क्शुरस्य धारानिशिता दुरत्यादुर्गं पथस्तत्कवयो वदन्ति।

Get up ! Wake up ! See the guidance of an Illumined teacher and release the Self.

Sharp like a razor's edge, the sages say,
Is the path, difficult to traverse.

Vote of Thanks



On behalf of the India International Centre and the IC Centre for governance, I have great pleasure in proposing a Vote of Thanks. We are deeply obliged to you Dr. Karan Singh. We are honoured that you are present here with us. In our earlier lectures which we had on Sardar Patel's Memory, we had people talking about him. Today, we have a person who has talked with him and who has met him in flesh and blood and also mentioning about the fact that it was not only joining the states but integrating them which was a major task which the Sardar did. Sir, we are honoured for your bringing a whole range of new things, new thoughts including the reverse mentoring. You have brought so many new ideas for us. We are deeply obliged. Thank you very much.

I also thank the audience for being here with us and please do join us for a cup of tea and before we break for tea, I request Mr. Prabhat Kumar to please give a memento on behalf of the IC Centre for Governance to Dr. Kaaran Singh. Thank you very much.

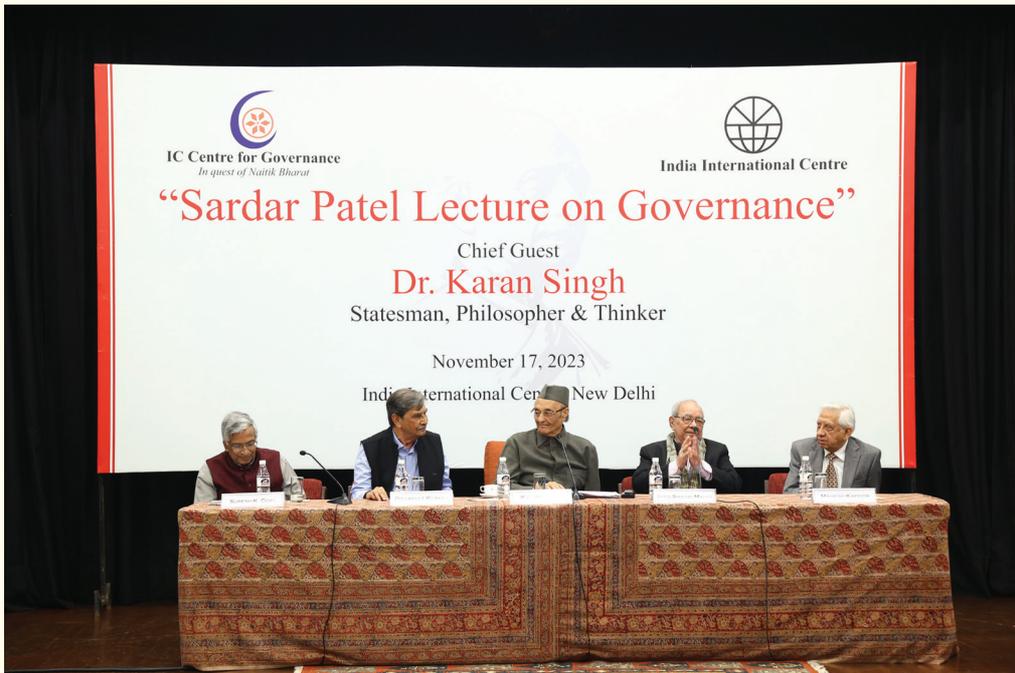
Mahesh Kapoor

Vice President, IC Centre for Governance



Photo Album of Event















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