

**Administrative Response to the Rights of the  
Marginalized: A Case Study of a Civil Servant**

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It is true that words are not always capable and faithful carriers of the subtleties and manner of emotions but if the feeling is true the intensity is felt at the other end.

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## **Chapter - 1**

### **Introduction**

Indian administration today is a product of history. It has the heritage of Kautilya, Ashoka, Akbar, Shersha and the British colonial administration. The last being the latest that has made the deepest impact on Indian administration. It is on this model that the administrative system of India has been built, basically as a model of force and extraction of surplus. The colonial power, which entered India in search of profit and business, did not destroy the basic structure but improvised it to suit their own purpose. It started using all the institutions and devices used by the earlier feudal state. But while the feudal state plundered the resources, the colonial state was in pursuit of maximization of profit. The centralized British administrative system exuded the predominant feature of a superiority complex in its aloofness from the general public. Colonialism, because of its mission, deepened and sharpened the coercive apparatus of the state in the process of extraction of surplus, gradually destroying the productive processes. To legitimize their roots, the colonial masters introduced educational and legal system, which oriented to produce clerks and lawyers for administration to keep the administrative and judicial system going. It created a class of people who were brown in colour and European in thinking. All attempts at reforms were directed or aimed at perpetuating the existing system, rather than altering it in anyway. However, they created a new set of officers who wielded power and worked as a source of their power. The Britishers made use of the pre-existing apparatus of administration, especially in the department of the revenue, police and justice.

Post-independent India's administration certainly appeared to be an ICS tradition of administration. David Potter says India had an unremarkable administrative continuity. Perhaps, the most difficult problem is the reorientation of the administrative machinery from its colonial outlook<sup>1</sup>.

Since the ICS was the instrument of the imperial power and the leaders of the Indian National Congress had made it clear during their struggle for independence that they wanted to abolish the ICS and all it stood for, Jawaharlal Nehru was "quite sure" in 1934, "no new order can be built in India as long as the spirit of the ICS pervades our administration and our public services, it being essential that the ICS and similar services must disappear

completely”<sup>2</sup>. Yet, when the British left in the 1940s and the new Indian government took over with Nehru as Prime Minister, the British were invited to stay on. As an Indian journalist later recalled, “this would be unbelievable were it not true that Nehru and his colleagues sought to build a new India, a more egalitarian society through the agency of these who had been the trained servants of imperialism. It is as if Lenin, on arrival in Russia, had promptly mustered the support of all the white Russians he could find<sup>3</sup>. Although Nehru went on to elaborate his belief that the continuation of the colonial administration was one of the main causes of India’s inability to solve the problem of poverty, Nehru and many others have been critical, fine did the congress change its position in the 1940s and opt for retaining an ICS framework and the tradition of administration it represented. It is often stated by scholars that it was easy for Nehru, who occupied a front rank position during the country’s freedom movement and functioned as Prime Minister of India from 1947-64, had almost opportunities for speaking on Public Administration; when in power, his views on the administrative system under the Raj were constantly not flattering and yet he desisted from any large scale administrative reform after independence, what could explain such inaction? These are among the questions, which may not be categorically answered, capable as they admittedly are of more than one interpretation.

One strong reason was the support of the landed class (including the princes) in India; the other was the capitalist class in Britain<sup>4</sup>. In other words, the general orientation of political thinking in the 1940s within the congress leadership in the Indian government and the constituent assembly was framed by the broader structure of classes and class interests. Secondly, the threat to national unity loomed large at the time of independence and change was perceived to be fraught with danger. Nehru changed his stance and declared, “First thing must come first and the first thing is the security and stability of India”. It was no time to start tampering with the bureaucracy”<sup>5</sup>.

Added to this was the personality of the leaders who had a great deal to do with the acceptance of the existing machinery. Sardar Patel was content with the structure of the machine. He is on record as saying that the machine was good enough; only adequate masters were needed to utilize it properly. Perhaps, his was a most decisive influence too, not only did Patel lean heavily on these but worked tirelessly to save the ICS and its steel frame. His efforts received a climax in 1949 in the Constituent Assembly debate on the ICS when he

rose to defend the ICS against its critics.... I have worked with them during this difficult period..... they are patriotic, loyal, sincere, able,.... remove them, Patel thundered, and I see nothing but a picture of chaos all over the country<sup>6</sup> (Indian CA debate, October 1949, pp. 48-52). Though Nehru and his team missed out the opportunity to revamp the administrative system when it is easy to carry out at a time of intensive political change, in consequence, the demand that political leadership made on the administrators was to change their outlook and bring changes in the administrative culture to suit the new situation of democracy and planned development. The expectation was that a change of heart would occur and the individual bureaucrat would reorient himself from the colonial outlook and transfer his loyalty to the democratic needs of the nation. To a certain extent, these expectations were fulfilled during the days of partition; the administrators were fully committed to work for the unity and integrity of the country when it was threatened but that was a situation of an extraordinary nature. In the day-to-day administration, in the developmental tasks, and in the nation-building activities, the task of reorienting the administrative ethos has not been an easy one. Disillusionment with administrative performance stems from this perceived failure<sup>7</sup>.

This is one section of the literature on Public Administration speaking of Nehru and the inability of the national leadership to bring about change in the early 1950s set the old system of administration firmly in the saddle.....

## I

After independence of the country, a democratic open and competitive political system not only legitimized the role of the political actors, but it also established their preeminent position over all other structures of the society. The government in India is the largest employer, and the biggest investor in economic development. Because of the leading role of the government in societal transformation, politics and political decision-makers have assumed a critical role in public affairs. In the performance of their role, political leaders come into direct and face-to-face relationship with public bureaucracy. Politics has become the major factor in determining bureaucratic behavior and action. Interaction between the politician and bureaucracy in India has generated many tensions and conflicts and a plethora of studies have emerged, based on different perspectives and concrete experiences.

A few well-known civil servants like Bonarjee<sup>8</sup>, Rao<sup>9</sup> and Mangat Rai<sup>10</sup> have critically examined the relationship between political actors and functioning administrators and these authors have attributed the deteriorating standards of bureaucratic performance to political interference and personalism and pressures of political leaders.

The main thrust of these writings is that politicians in India are not wedded to norms of legality, sanctity of procedures and rules, administration has been pressurized to comply, with the demands of the politician by bending the rules and flouting the procedures.

The mechanism of political interference in day-to-day administrative routine is dependent on the politicians' power to promote and transfer an unwilling, uncooperative and procedure-oriented official. Politicians have been able to establish their preeminent position over functioning bureaucrats because of the 'patronage' of promotions and transfers. A select few studies by Scholars and functioning bureaucrats reviewed below reflect the conflicts of values, morals, aspirations and personality backgrounds.

C.P. Bhambhari, in his book, 'Bureaucracy and Politics in India', argues that the images of each other is found to be 'negative', the political leaders have since been able to establish their dominance over the bureaucrats. Indeed, they have become the driving force behind the Indian political system, not only have the bureaucrats been brought wholly under the authority of the politicians, but sometimes the politicians have even used the bureaucrats for their own political and personal needs<sup>11</sup>.

Mangat Rai, who worked as Chief Secretary, first in the State of Punjab and later in the State of Jammu & Kashmir, provides an insight into the strategy adopted by Pratap Singh Kairon and Bakshi Ghulam, the then Chief Minister of Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir respectively, in dealing with the bureaucracy, both the Chief Ministers employed police officials for getting information on public affairs, bypassed regular administrative procedures and channels and took decisions on public issues on the basis of their own information and interest<sup>12</sup>.

Mangat Rai writes: Much of Bakshi's business was translated at a Sunday morning gathering at his house, no one was specially invited by everyone who was anyone in the

critical decision-making process was present. If you did not, or could not secure entry, you did not, in fact, partake in these decisions. The main task of the state secretariat under the chairmanship of Kairon was to regulate the decisions taken by the Chief Minister. Mangat Rai testifies as follows:

“Kairons headlong thrust for at all levels of government and in direct dealings with both official and the public, often ignoring the lines of command, kept the secretariat fully occupied in clearing the debris and fulfilling the requirement of law and rule, as well as in maintaining morale and corporate effort in the services. The consequence of this style of politics was that the secretariat supposed and implemented measures in which the chief minister had expressed an interest. He writes: “A daily task for Kairon’s administration was to adopt the CM urges and policy to the requirements of a rule of law”<sup>13</sup>.

Bonarjee<sup>14</sup>, who had served as Chief Secretary of the United Provinces (UP) and had held many other responsible positions during the British and the early post-independence period, resigned as an unhappy man. Bonarjee wrote, “What I had taken for granted to be the foundation of sound administration was now not merely to be questioned but to be cast aside as unsuitable for the new India, both the base and the super structure of the administration were now to undergo a rapid and complete metamorphosis. He advanced three main reasons for the deterioration in administrative standards, as he perceived it, in the post-independence period. One reason, according to him, was that the party in power was not prevented from tampering in the routine of administration. The second was that the local politicians put every kind of illegal pressure on the magistracy and the police at the district level.

Kothari and R. Roy tell us that the politicians started popular agitations against the bureaucrats to secure fulfillment of popular demands<sup>15</sup>. In the days that followed, it should be stated that the political aspect of administrative life became more prominent. The standard problem in the Punjab District Administration, as reported by the Punjab Government’s Administrative Reforms Commission. The prestige of the Collector, they claimed, has declined due to day-to-day interference by politicians with their authority<sup>16</sup> (p. 153).



Anand Chakravarty's study lays bare the linkages between local and state level politicians and their pulls and pressures on administration. These linkages make local people feel that the politicians can always get things done by the administration<sup>17</sup>.

In an extraordinarily candid statement, the Governor of Bihar, during 1962-67, said that he never felt that either the minister or the officers seriously addressed themselves to economic and social problems in Bihar; so preoccupied were they in their political struggle with each other<sup>18</sup>.

Relationships at the centre were also uneasy in 1966, according to the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi. The problem had come to a head in the later part of the 1966 when several ministers had asked for transfer of their secretaries and the appointment of new ones of their choice. Mrs. Gandhi was then resisting their pressures<sup>19</sup>. Deshmukh<sup>20</sup>, the Cabinet Secretary himself, had asserted that since 1960s, the practice of all political parties, all without exception, to use bureaucratic machinery to gain power and retain power has been virtually institutionalized.

Indira Gandhi's accession to and her proclamation of a state of emergency in India added some significant dimensions to Indian politics and hence it is worthwhile to discuss a few more relevant details or incidents with regard to politics and administration. The emergency was the watershed for the IAS, all the traditional concepts and practices, which were supposed to sustain its functioning, became irrelevant and thrown overboard. Indira Gandhi destroyed its apolitical role and encouraged its politicization. A leading journalist, watching her handling of the services, observed: "Her regime was instrumental in politicizing the civil servants, who instead of performing their role as provided in the constitution, became a willing vehicle for carrying out political activities and even unleashing vindictive actions against the political opponent of the ruling coterie both within and outside the ruling party<sup>21</sup>. What generally happened is/was politicians started the practice of making career advancements of civil servants, committed to the authoritarian rule of the leader. Those who asserted their independence were sidelined and the opportunists started making tacit alliances with politicians" unbending ICS Home Secretary was removed and a pliant Punjabi IAS from Rajasthan was installed in his place. The slogan, "be committed or be omitted" began to acquire ominous tones and many a capable civil servants have been hounded from office as a result of political or personal vendetta<sup>21</sup>. She further directed that the tyranny of seniority

should be done away with and selectivity in filling “senior posts” should be restored<sup>22</sup> (p. 232). Her ulterior motive was that she wanted a free hand in packing the key top positions in the central secretariat with spineless men who would do her bidding<sup>23</sup>.

There have been cases where civil servants who were not found fit to be empaneled as joint secretaries have been posted as Secretary to Government of India or even as the Cabinet Secretary. Civil servants with lack of integrity have been empaneled for higher posts, while several others of impeccable honesty have been disregarded. The impact of emergency was quite severe on the civil services. She demanded total submission from the civil service to serve her own ends. In her typical fashion, she directed the onslaught by an attack on the neutrality of the IAS. A senior official of the PMO, during the emergency, has described how the duo (the constitutional and the extra-constitutional authorities) had no compunction in misusing the investigative machinery of the CBI and of the Revenue Department, Intelligence Wing to harass those not complying with their wishes. Utmost loyalty and total obedience to the dictates of the mother and son had become essential qualifications for any central assignments. The all-India character of the services was ignored; there was an unmistakable bias in favour of Punjabis, while the South Indians were discounted. The reason, perhaps, was the preponderance of Punjabis around Sanjay Gandhi. Sanjay Gandhi had married a Punjabi and his closest confidants, Navin Chawala of the IAS, Bhinder of the Police, Mehta of the Revenue Services and others like Jagan Mohan, Ambika Soni, etc. were all Punjabis.<sup>24</sup> It is further evidenced by the Shah Commission of Enquiry that the government began to post on the vital public positions persons who were willing to further the interests of the center of power and these appointments were made in gross violation of established administrative norms and practices<sup>25</sup>.

The trend became endemic. Rajiv Gandhi, his party and his henchmen were principally responsible for the loss of civil service virtues and ethical degeneration in the IAS and other services. His party's government had set the trend, at the centre and in all the states, of penalizing officials who tried to uphold the law. His party's ministers, many of whom were corrupt to the core, forced the civil servants to contrive with threats of harassments and penalties and his own reputation for honesty was not entirely clean with a number of scams and system failures coming to light over a wide spectrum of government activity in which he was involved. Further Rajiv Gandhi and his ministers started resenting

any attempt to explain why an order cannot be complied with. In doing so, Bhasker Ghosh, a secretary in the central ministry of Information and broadcasting, has recalled his unhappy experiences with the minister that he served. It was invariably a petty matter that spoilt his relationship with them. He has remarked that minister Gadgil was too eager to please the powers in his party and always insisted on inauguration of some non-descript event in the news bulletins. His successor, Panja, wanted the telephone numbers and addresses of attractive female news readers and presenters. H.K.L. Bhagat wanted the movie films his son was toting to be shown on the Doordarshan.... Another one, K.P. Singh Deo, had made it his mission to please as many of his M.P. friends and ministers from his party as he could by acceding to their every request, no matter how absurd! The last one, Sangma, started intriguing from the first day in office to bring in his favourite as secretary from his previous ministry<sup>26</sup>. Ghose was probably rather unlucky in his ministers, but his experience was not uncommon.

It is also interesting to read from the experience of Madhav Godbole, IAS, a former union home secretary, with regard to the behaviour of politicians. The information and broadcasting minister K.P. Singh Deo had reportedly laid down certain ground rules for the functioning of the civil servants in the ministry... servants should not speak till the master permits and you are not to apply your mind, you are just to do what you are told....<sup>27</sup>. A few cases of premature retirements and a few, who went into oblivion, also find place in such readings. Others were not so fortunate. Having resigned from the service after serious differences with the Chief Minister, Chanderlekha (a lady IAS from Tamil Nadu) was physically assaulted by the Chief Minister's party men and had acid thrown at her face, disfiguring her for life<sup>28</sup>.

The situation in the states was much worse. The present lot of ministers were, by and large, poorly educated, ignorant of elementary principles of politics or public administration and had hardly any notion of decency. They were (are) usually aggressively brash and immature in their dealings and conversant with the norms of civilized behaviour were exceptions. There have been instances of legislators assaulting senior offices in their chambers in the secretariat. The ministers are generally drawn from the same stock. Naturally, it is almost impossible to carry out a rational discussion on the merits or otherwise of a proposal. In short, the secretaries are hesitant to write or speak without fear or favour.

Being the managers of the “transfer industry,” transfers, promotion, assignment, plumb positions are effected on considerations other than competence, suitability of the incumbent for the assignment or the need of the organization. Robert Wade<sup>29</sup> has shown how in India the discretionary powers of the politicians to transfer civil servants have been used to extract bribes and mobilize electoral funds (Wade – 1983). Yet another interesting observation is made by S.R. Maheswari, transfers and postings were the only creative activity of the government in UP and Bihar<sup>30</sup>. The worst motive for transfers besides as punishment has now come to be monetary considerations. The “transfer Bazar” has come to be a lucrative business for politicians. Price posts are open to highest bidders. Money is made by MLAs’ and MPs’ in recommending transfers. The result is that transfer has become one of the major causes of corruption. If money is exchanged for giving a post, the employee thus posted is bound to be corrupt to recoup the amount extorted from him<sup>31</sup>. It is stated that corruption at the political level has been seen as the main reason why the bureaucracy is steeped in dishonesty. With the return of Indira Gandhi and her tribe to political power in the 1980s’ and it was absolute power, the floodgates of corruption were opened. Corruption both political and bureaucratic became rampant. Politician-business man, criminal–bureaucracy nexus was becoming visible with all its ramifications.

Mulayam Singh, the Chief Minister, showing exemplary caste loyalties continued to be a patron of corruption when he appointed Neera yadav as the Chief Secretary in 2005, Neera Yadav had been voted as the second most corrupt officer by the IAS association of UP in 1995<sup>32</sup>. This is not just in the case of UP and Bihar but elsewhere too. Where corrupt politicians are protective shadows.

In the words of Bhaskar Ghose, who was not exaggerating when on exiting from the corridors of power, he said, “I was leaving a world where hypocrisy, deceit and dissembling were the order of the day and where all that mattered was advancement – personal and political<sup>33</sup>.”

Unless the top is perceived as unblemished, there is little chance that the administration down below will be clean. If the services have to recognize the value of integrity, it would be necessary first to make it easy for the dishonest political executives to be ruthlessly dealt with.

## II

Civil servants in power are as much motivated by self-interest as are politicians. The pursuit of self-interest by civil servants is manifested in their desire to stay in power and aspire for plum positions during and after the services. In contrast to the above section, this section presents the flip side of the story – bureaucratic interference in politics. Studies on this have begun to appear in increasing numbers today. A large number of scholars were attracted to the field of bureaucracy and politics in India, development administration; motivated not only by scholarly reasons but also by the belief that administration was the instrument of change and means of the possibility of changing administrative behaviour within the given structure.

Public bureaucracy plays a central and critical role in nation-building in modern societies and on its performance capacity depends the success or failure of various crucial programmes of socio-economic development. As a catalytic agent of change, bureaucracy becomes a powerful social institution in developing countries.

This phenomenon of bureaucracy/administration in politics is not a new development. A very senior ICS officer (of 1922 vintage) had observed the change much earlier even before the emergency, after independence. A new class among the ICS sprang up. Instead of devoting their time and energy to the work entrusted to them, their aim was seen to please the ministers. The weaker members of the service began to realize that it was not hard and conscientious work that was the passport to promotion but sycophancy. Senior members of the service, in order to secure extensions after superannuating or to get other lucrative assignments after retirement, were only ready to carry out the orders of the ministers even when they found such requests contrary to the dictates of their conscience. More serious was intellectual dishonesty some members were clever enough to find out, which way the minds of the ministers work. They would record notes contrary to the dictates of their conscience with the ministers with a view to improve their prospects. Corruption is now fast creeping into the services<sup>34</sup>.

The IAS faithfully replicated this behaviour in the 1970s and 1980s and thereafter.... A few anecdotes are worth mentioning. In the case of Punjab Chief Minister, Pratap Singh Kairon, “the report cites numerous instances of special undue favours shown by civil servants while dealing with the Chief Minister’s son and relatives. A District Collector, who is a fairly senior official, illegally granted sanctions to the Chief Minister’s son without making

the normal inquiries and even before the report of the executive engineer from the public works department had been received”<sup>35</sup>. The SR Das report cites cases after cases to prove that the civil servants of Punjab, under Kairon, gave a short shrift to established rules and proprieties and came under complete control of Kairon family.

In the case of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, Jammu-Kashmir Chief Minister, 1965, Justice Raja Gopal Ayyangar, the commission’s verdict was that civil servants were lacking in character, were very unreliable and were willing tools of the government in power. It felt anguished at sordid level of affairs and maintained that an honest and public spirited civil service was among the prerequisites of high political morality in the society<sup>36</sup>.

The Aiyer Commission of inquiry – 1967-70 – which was appointed by the United Front Government in Bihar, after the elections of 1967, against certain ex-ministers, who had held office at different times during 1943-1967 (i.e. during Congress Rule). The commission reported that “civil servants had gone out of their way to please them, and considered this kind of a mutually supportive relationship to be a truly depressing state of affairs”. It went on to add that it was also their duty to advise them clearly and firmly whenever the actions of the ministers are not in accordance with the well-recognized and established principles of administration. Nothing can be more disastrous to a state than that the heads of administration should, instead of advising the minister properly, take to honouring them and toeing their line”<sup>37</sup>.

Similar was the finding of Mudholkar Commission of enquiry (1968-69). It observed, “I have come across at least one case where a secretary to the government failed in his duty to give his own opinion even when it was sought by minister”<sup>38</sup>.

The A.N. Mulla<sup>39</sup> Commission of Inquiry 1969-71 and the GK Muttar<sup>40</sup> Commission of Inquiry 1973-74. The above commissions’ reports also invite aberration to an emerging alliance between the civil servants, the minister and the industrialists, much to the detriment of public interest. It observed “The experience of life tells us that whenever authority shows its interest in some matter, but wants it to be pursued within the framework of law, the subordinate agency, in order to cater to the wishes of the higher authority, only remembers the interest manifested by the higher authority and the second part becomes a casualty....”.

The commission falls constrained to remark Shri Sundarajan's (Secretary of the Dept.) conduct falls far below the standard of a civil servant. Shri Sundharajan appears throughout to have ignored the interest of the state and to have adopted a policy, which was likely to be favoured by the minister.....".

The Sarkaria Commission of Inquiry against M. Karunanidhi and others found in the course of its investigation that civil servants offered themselves as intermediaries or 'conduit pipes' connecting the business men on the one hand and the minister on the other. In the aerial spraying scheme, for instance, the ministers extorted a commission – or a 'cut' – from the contractors and the money passed through the hands of some civil servants. The Sarkaria Commission of Inquiry writes: "Now remains the case of three officers – Vaidyalingam,\* Vedanarayanan\* and Hari Bhasker.\* All the three to a lesser or a greater degree cooperated in the implementation of the extortion plan conceived by the minister and the Chief Minister to extract gratification from the operators. The period of internal emergency, though spanning only two years, was (in India's post-1947 political history) highly crowded with events covering a wide range of bureaucratic behaviour. This was also the time when questions of morality, values and ethics were raised. There was wider acceptance of civil servants indulging in short-circuiting of administrative procedures, level jumping in chains of command, and non-conformity to standard administrative norms and values<sup>41</sup>.

Shah Commission reported that the attitude of the general run of the public functionaries was largely characterized by a paralysis of the will to do the right and proper thing. Most IAS officers in secretariats and districts carried out illegal orders, helped the Prime Minister jail her opponents and almost gleefully helped gag the press (the commission found the collectors of the districts obediently carrying out instructions emanating from the politicians issued on personal or political considerations, and the ICS and IAS officers forging of records, fabricating grounds of detention, and anti-dating orders (Shah Commission of Inquiry – final report)<sup>42</sup>There were many cases where officers "curry favoured" with politicians by doing what they thought the people in authority desired, "for many excesses did not originate at the political level"<sup>43</sup>.

Senior civil servants saw their positions as stepping stones to plum jobs that the state could offer. Gubernatorial appointments provide attractive and difficult to ignore. What became even more attractive were the international assignments far more lucrative than the

domestic jobs. Career paths were manipulated in many cases to help them achieve their ambitions<sup>44</sup>.

Apropos of the deterioration of character of civil servants, P.K. Gupta<sup>45</sup>, a senior bureaucrat, observed, “in the context of the emergency of 1975 that when they were asked to bend, they chose to crawl. How is it now that they tender to crawl even before anybody asks them even to bend?” The will to stand up and be counted, and to be firm, is no longer found.

Kuldeep Nayyar painfully recalls, “How many orders, both oral and written, did they (bureaucrats) defy during the emergency? Did anyone then come to the rescue of a critic who was harassed or detained without trial? Now the civil service has got into the habit of doing unsavory jobs without even being told”.<sup>46</sup> Emergency marked the beginning of the end of IAS autonomy. Hereafter, IAS officers started playing handmaid to the politicians. A day has come when a discredited politician like the ex-minister, Kalpanath Rai, would proclaim with an enviable degree of certitude, “They (the IAS) are just like servants – chaprassies who bring water when you tell them to”<sup>47</sup>.

T.N. Seshan, a flamboyant IAS, close to the Gandhi family, laments, “The bureaucracy for the most part utterly caved in”. On yet another occasion, he colourfully described civil servants as call girls and backboneless wonders....<sup>48</sup>. Why did the IAS allow itself to be colonized so badly? The more likely explanation is of C.P. Bhambhari, who argues that the IAS officers forged alliances with politicians to brighten their own careers and to gain a greater share of social resources<sup>49</sup>. This is confirmed by Madhava-Godhole, an IAS officer, “This is now a mutually reinforcing system with each aiding and abetting the other in getting the maximum out of the spoil system”<sup>50</sup>. Rather than resist the trend, the civil service, with honourable exceptions, looked for a *modus viendi* and legitimized the politicization. This trend continued in 1980s and thereafter, many IAS officers became members of the personal servants and stooped to friction like servile lakeys in a medieval court. They not only forsook ethical standards but also compromised many laws and convictions. Several top IAS men in Rajiv Gandhi’s court were known for their misdeeds, and were named in publications,<sup>51</sup> apparently without affecting their future career. In fact, demoralization and decay of the bureaucracy was attended with far-reaching consequences. The top bureaucracy of the country stopped performing one of the most important functions



of the higher civil service in a parliamentary democracy....., namely that of giving frank, fearless and sound advice on matters of policy to their political superiors, for reasons best known, placements during and post-retirement placements, handed out at the discretion of politicians in power.

Many IAS officers plunged into politics after retirement. They must have used the last few years of their active service in cultivation of the ruling party with a view to earn its good will for their entry into politics. B.G. Deshmukh acted as the go between two rivals in the congress party, offered to raise party funds from the Bombay industrialists and provided intelligence to the party candidate for the Prime Minister. Ram Pradhan, the Home Secretary, was for a congress party ticket for entry into the upper house of the parliament. M.S. Gill, the Chief Election Commissioner had no qualms in accepting a congress ticket immediately after retirement to become a Member of the Rajya Sabha; the outgoing Chief Secretary in Madhya Pradesh, willingly undertook to prepare the Congress Party's election manifesto and the story ends not here.<sup>52</sup> These developments proved counter productive to the democratic political process. Many studies that came up in late 1970s and thereafter found that the general evaluation of public administration by Indian respondents was 'negative'. Elders weld\*, Jagannadham \* and Baranabas\*<sup>53</sup>. Kuldeep Mathur<sup>54</sup>, stressed the need for restoration of the 'publicness' of public bureaucracy.

The process of promotion in India is only an abominable rat race and in this rat race, commensurate operators in the civil service have routinely made use of the services of power brokers, fixers, godmen, astrologers, politicians and even cultivate, the known familiar ties with known political bosses and legislators, top industrialists to get themselves empaneled<sup>55</sup>.

A large number of cases of corruption involving public servants have been referred to the Vigilance Commissioners and the Central Bureau of Investigation. During the period from April 1, 1957, to December 31, 1962, major penalties (dismissal, removal, compulsory retirement, reduction in rank, etc.) were imposed on 5,583 government servants and action, including imposition of minor penalties, was taken against 38,650 government servants. There is no sign of decline in the number of officers involved in cases of corruption<sup>56</sup>.

The whole truth is that both politicians and civil servants are responsible for the erosion of the integrity and dignity of the democratic institutions. The abuse of bureaucratic

norms and procedures for personal and partisan advantage of political leaders have taken place with full collaborations of the public servants who have opted to be willing tools of unscrupulous politicians. The collaborative project of politicians and bureaucrats is best summed up in the words of C.P. Bhambhari, “Both politicians and bureaucrats are partners in bending rules. Both provide support to each other for getting collective benefits”<sup>57</sup>.

There are ample evidences showing who ‘tempts’ whom, what is apparent is each one is trying to make hay till the sunshine. The interface between the two being so close and intimate that it is apt to refer what Potter calls it Political Administrators<sup>58</sup>. Overall survey of literature shows the dark side of bureaucracy and politics. This deteriorating culture is a cause of concern particularly when the bureaucracy has been called upon to play the role of development catalyst and change agent.

### III

Bureaucratic response to development in India has been a subject matter of some empirical studies in the last few decades. A brief discussion of some major studies in this field is attempted here.

In an empirical study done in late 1970s<sup>59</sup>, V.A. Pai Pandikar and S.S. Kshirsagar, “on bureaucratic response to development” found the bureaucratic adoption to its developmental role to be “moderately adopted and more often, poorly adopted, in terms of citizen orientation and in terms of result orientation. They further concluded that the “poor-work commitment, change orientation and citizen orientation had resulted in poor performance upsetting of plan priorities, cost escalation and the continuation of paternalistic tendencies towards the citizen clientele on the part of bureaucracy.

In another study conducted by R.B. Jain and P.N. Chowdhry<sup>60</sup>, on “Bureaucracy and Development” (1981), a comparative study in orientation and behaviour of bureaucracy engaged in developmental and non-developmental tasks”. It was pointed out that status consciousness, impersonality and systems of rules were as much as guiding value to the development bureaucracy as to non-development bureaucracy. The authors, therefore, conclude that a large number of officials engaged in development had a bureaucratic attitude,

which hindered processes of change and development. Authority oriented outlook of the officials did come into conflict with the achievement of the development goals. Further, H.R. Chaturvedi<sup>61</sup> (1977), who in his study, 'Bureaucracy and Local Community: Dynamics of Development', has concluded that the existing bureaucratic organization developed for the maintenance of law and order and collection of revenue was inadequate for carrying out the task of developmental change. Kuldeep Mathur<sup>62</sup> in his study, 'Bureaucratic Response to Development – A Study of BDOs in Rajasthan and UP' (1972), concluded that even though the need to fulfill development programmes was most urgent, much of the bureaucratic pursuit was directed towards activities other than the achievement of developmental goals. N.K. Singh,<sup>63</sup> in his study, 'Bureaucracy Positions and Persons', found that the present bureaucratic system weighed heavily in favour of routine administrative tasks and concentrated authority and decision-making in the hands of elite classes, which tended to become power-oriented. It was, therefore, unsuitable for the achievement of goals of national development. Prem Lata Bansal <sup>64</sup>(1974), in her study on the 'Administrative Response to Development in India', found that a majority of administrators are developmentalists but the level of their commitment to modernizing values is low. Mehta's summary shows the extent to which bureaucracy is seen to have failed. She points out that "our development preference suggests that our bureaucracy has neither been goal-oriented nor 'action-oriented' as far as alleviation of poverty, promotion of social equity and social development of people are concerned<sup>65</sup>.

One common revelation in these studies is that there is a significant continuity in the behavioural patterns with the colonial period. The elitist and man-on-the-horseback style status-oriented are yet to change significantly. Because of these colonial features – aloofness, preservation of the structure of power, autonomy, anti-people (poor) in accessibility coupled with vast opportunities for handling large public funds have eroded the ethical standards of the bureaucratic behaviour; obviously the ability of the bureaucratic system to cope with the challenges of development has not grown commensurately with the demands of development. The trend continued in the later days, in fact, with more vigour. The elitist nature of the bureaucracy could not change. Administrative Reforms Committees and Commissions were only 'correction slips'<sup>66</sup>. Worst, they were only 'endorsement slips'<sup>67</sup>. In fact, the style became more and more repressive, for which reasons, pro-poor planned programmes started crumbling. Paul. H. Applebey, who studied the bureaucratic pattern in India, expressed the

view that there was a dichotomy between bureaucratic dispositions and development heads in India, which is because it carried too much baggage from the past<sup>68</sup>.

### **Repressive Bureaucracy...**

There is a widespread frustration and dissatisfaction among the masses due to its anti-people orientation. The experience over the years shows that it has behaved more as a ruling class than a serving instrument. There is a great hue and cry to make bureaucracy more responsive. The study by the Lal Bahadur Sastry National Academy of Administration<sup>69</sup> sums it up: over the years, the bureaucracy has become completely insensitive and even hostile to the poorer section of society. The District Magistrate, in any given district, enjoys a status far out of proportion to his output. He/she lives in a palatial bungalow, surrounded by a horde of servants and staff who add to his inaccessible aura. He meets the politicians and the more privileged sections of the society in his district and spends most of his time in state capital and Delhi seeking a better posting. Night halts within the district, outside a few well-located inspection bungalows have become rare. He is supposed to be accountable to the people, especially the underprivileged poor, instead, he feels happy if he can, by the support of an important sectarian leader, who ensures a comfortable stay in the district (Sen, 1995, p. 15).

The scenario confirms to what Michael Crozeier<sup>70</sup> calls 'bureaucratic behaviour', the nominal association that people have with the Nulojar and frequent sense of the word 'bureaucracy', which as Crozier explains 'evokes' the slowness, the ponderousness, the routine, the complication of procedures and the maladapted responses of 'bureaucratic' organization to the needs, which they should satisfy and the frustrations, which their members, clients or subjects consequently endure (1964, p. 3) from the field we have the voice of a senior civil servant who worked in the state machinery for nearly 35 years, to speak of the repressive nature of the state agency, he recalls an instance when he was working as the Chief Secretary of Tripura State: "In a village where he had halted, that night, the tribals met him and requested him to protect them from the revenue, police and forest departments, which, in effect, meant that they should be saved from the government itself"<sup>71</sup>. This demonstrates the height of repression by the agents of the state. One of the drawbacks of our bureaucratic system has been its unresponsive nature that has eroded the confidence of

citizens to the extent it seems irreparable. The manner in which people are coming out to speak of their dissatisfaction with the system.

### **Prejudiced bureaucracy:**

Bureaucracy is seen at its worst when it comes to the question of Dalits, establishing the inter-connection between the administrative culture and its social bases, drawing our attention to the fact that the causes of organizational behaviour are located outside the administrative structure. G. Haragopal and V.S. Prasad<sup>72</sup> argue that, in Indian context, bureaucracy has built-in rigidity. With the result, the treatment that each caste receives is so discriminative that universal norms, like rule of law, would be inconceivable with the result, the concept and forms of justice vary from one caste to the other so much that the scale of crime and punishment changes in an inverse relation to the caste. Explaining the interconnection between the base and dominant emerging trends in the administrative system and its behavioral modes, they argue that the inegalitarian values account for the particularistic behaviour.

Particularism always results in discriminative behaviour, with the result that universal norms become difficult. The particularistic administrative culture is summed up in the following statement: "Tell me the name of the man, I will tell the rule". The individual whims and fancies of the leader play a very important role in administration. Extending the logic, they argue that articulation of common interests is a rare phenomenon in Indian setting. The insiders in bureaucracy pursue particularistic goals more rigorously and tend to neglect common goals. The ineffective and defective implementation of important programmes like land reforms or anti-poverty programmes can be explained from this angle. This is precisely the reason why bureaucracy behaves indifferently rather 'cruelly' towards the Dalits<sup>73</sup>. Many studies have proved that the police and the administration representing upper caste interests have ensured that provisions of the act are not invoked in cases of atrocities against Dalits. The National Commission for Scheduled Castes (Tamil Nadu)<sup>74</sup> has accused the administration for poor implementation of Dalit welfare measures, serious lacunae in enforcing the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities - PoA) Act, non-distribution of land and house sites to Dalits.

From the papers and documents presented at a two-day international seminar on Uttar Pradesh, organized by the Observer Research Foundation (ORF), a Delhi-based think-tank<sup>75</sup>, “Political leadership found it difficult to implement what was perhaps its most important Dalit empowerment programme – the allotment of patta land to Dalits on account of strong anti-Dalit sentiments within the administration. Dalits were unable to occupy patta land allotted to them because of intimidation and in some cases, even physical prevention by upper caste groups. Not surprisingly, sections of the police and the administration were hand in glove with the upper castes elements (Frontline). Such was their allegiance to the caste interests that even repeated orders from the Chief Minister to the District Magistrate failed to have any effect in a number of cases (Frontline)<sup>76</sup>.”

A very dismayed reading of A. Ramaiah (on Dalit rights and Dignity) and Anand Teltumbde, Ramaiah<sup>77</sup>, from his field experience concludes that the implementation of the PoA act has largely remained tardy and SCs and STs have not been able to derive full benefits available under the Act. There appears a clear lack of will on the part of the law enforcement officers to take action. He further adds, “The administration at all levels has failed to respond with adequate sensitivity and urgency. In many cases, these authorities are found to be perpetrators of violence against the Dalits and have failed to provide them with adequate security against caste atrocities. In other words, the state’s repression was unprecedented. Police and the administration were unwilling to act.

Anand Teltumbde’s work on, Kharlanji<sup>78</sup> exposes the gangrenous heart of the administration and the police. It represents one of the violent prejudices of the state machinery. Administration was unwilling to act, refused to register cases, fabrication of evidences; laxity in investigation, tampering with the case records had exposed the culpability of the state machinery. Anand documents that what materialized thereafter was not so much against the criminals of Kharlanji as it was against the criminality of the state machinery in protecting them”. The police repression that sought to crush the spontaneous Dalit protests across the state was an equally grave indictment of the state anti-Dalit attitude (Kharlanji)<sup>79</sup>. Dr. B.D. Sharma<sup>80</sup>, in his work, “Dalits betrayed” states the most tragic part is that all-institutions – executive, legislature, judiciary – have not measured up to their grave constitutional responsibility of safeguarding the interests of the deprived sections of our

society. The executive in particular with its distorted role-perception has ignobly worked against the interest of those whose well-being is its sacred trust.

P.S. Krishnan<sup>81</sup>, laying a roadmap for empowering Dalits – alongside the state, the role of bureaucracy is found indifferent and hostile to the schemes of empowering of the Dalits. In the many areas of development and protection of the SC & STs, the official machinery is found to be adversarial. He further adds “while there has been the phenomenon of over administration in areas and sections pertaining to the affluent and rich classes, there has simultaneously been under administration in areas, pertaining to SCs and STs and other weaker sections.

#### IV

All administrative Organizations across the world are governed by the Weberian rational-authority and as an ideal form of public administration. Liberal social science saw bureaucrats as faceless occupants of government offices, administering public policy more or less rationally. Further what did not receive adequate attention was the issue of bureaucratic power and its relation with development role? Further since the time of Max Weber, the focus on bureaucratic power was part of the discussion of the dangers that bureaucracy posed to democracy and how its rise was incompatible with increasing processes of democratization. The rule by officials was seen in direct opposition to the rule by the people through their elected representatives. The task therefore of the democratic state was to devise mechanisms to control bureaucracy. In this context the lines below referring to Weber’s authority types examines that bureaucrats are rational actors, choosing actions that maximize their utility, how bureaucracy has reinforced to pursue self-interest through “Rationality” against public interest. Thus the authority typologies that Weber provides is not all exhaustive, India with its social base of empathetic model and indigenous culture has complemented this authority types, which has set not only high standards of administrative efficiency but transformative agenda of social justice.

## **Weberian authority typologies – in exhaustive:**

Academically speaking, the most familiar paradigm guiding researches in the field of administration and bureaucracy continues to be that of Max Weber. Little attempt has been made to develop alternative conceptual framework. In other words, modern literature has internalized the Weberian perspective.

While this study takes the Weberian legal-rational authority typology as a theoretical underpinning and attempts to explore on an indigenous model in bureaucracy, which can complement the legal-rational authority. Weber's authority typologies being – traditional authority – charismatic authority and the legal-rational authority<sup>82</sup>. Of the three authority types, the 'legal-rational' is viewed as the ideal one, for its rationality is highly superior than the earlier irrational forms, which were feudal, coercive and arbitrary, personal and personality centric. However, Max Weber held a romantic view of rationality in terms of legitimacy of power. Weber extolled the virtues of bureaucracy as its focus is in the legal rational authority. The concept itself indicates that what is legal is also rational. However, the question does not arise whether the legal and rational concepts are necessarily positive and developmental. Max Weber has avoided the moral question. In other words, the rules and laws Weber had expected would define the role behaviour of civil servants and cover the range of this discretion while making decisions; sadly enough, such rules have neither created structures of accountability nor led to publicness. On the contrary, rules themselves have been used to create rents by artfully limiting the ability of the civil society and private sector to operate<sup>83</sup>.

The Weberian prescription, therefore, is necessary but not a sufficient condition for restraining of self-interested behaviour. Clearly, one needs to go beyond Weber. If Weber homogenized the legal-rational authority as universal, studies on Indian administrative culture identified different typologies, which show that Indian bureaucracy does not conform to the Weberian form. Although, theoretically, it is the Weberian form that has been accepted, the inadequacy of structural functional differentiation, the economy, polity and culture overlap and influence each other thereby giving rise to a deep interconnection between administrative culture and its societal base leading to heterogeneity in models. One study on the social base of administrative culture has identified five different models, namely, the egoistic, efficient and pragmatic lumpen, comprador and sympathetic.



The egoistic are rooted in the pre-colonial legacies. They are arrogant, boasting and aggressive towards the people and towards their subordinates but submissive and ready to do anything to please their masters. They indulge in tale carrying and work against other colleagues. The egoistic are self-centred functionaries employing all means and exploit all avenues for self-perpetuation. They may even subvert the organizational structures and plunder the public resources. They cling more to the form than to the essence. They do not hesitate to abandon the legal-rational laws, if it serves their ego.

The pragmatic and efficient are based in the capitalist-bureaucratic mode of development. They are hardworking and their main aim is to sincerely carry out the job assigned to them. They are an asset to their political and administrative bosses, but may not be very useful to the larger masses. They may bend the rules but would not abandon them. This model is closer to the Weberian bureaucratic legal-rational model.

The lumpen and comprador are bureaucrats on the other hand rooted in either the distortions of capitalist development or the increasing integration of India with the global economy. These bureaucrats are corrupt, opportunistic, manipulative and cunning. They lack human values. They flout the rules or interpret them according to their personal convenience.

Frequently, they apply one rule to themselves and quite another to others. They carefully build and maintain their linkages. They rise very fast to high positions without any credentials or qualifications. They always remain close to administration at all levels. Today, the bureaucrats of the comprador model are – jet set to move out to greener pastures in foreign lands. Their tribe is increasing in the wake of economic globalization. The sole motive of such bureaucrats is to manage plum appointments for themselves in various world bodies and international inter-governmental agencies.

The empathetic model is fully committed to the country's constitution and does not negate the established laws and rules of the service. The roots of this model lie in the welfare or socialistic consciousness, deriving its support from humanitarian values. These types of bureaucrats are hardworking, sincere and sensitive. They live a modest life and believe in honest living, their concern for the poor can be quite embarrassing to the political system where commitment to the poor is only at the level of rhetoric. This style goes beyond hierarchy, rule and file, self and ego. It seeks to bridge the existing gap between the state and

civil society and in completing the task of putting the constitutional socio-economic structure in its place. The empathetic model challenges Kautilya's deep suspicion that no administrator can escape from being corrupt just as fish cannot escape from swallowing the water<sup>84</sup>.

Indian administration being a product of history having its roots in ancient administration modeled on Kautilya's Arthashastra which is essentially a pattern of force for extraction of surplus. It is basically by a class of officials who formed the basic units of bureaucracy and failed by choice to address the needs of the peripheral population, particularly the village cultivators and tribals who were so crucial and formed the largest section of the State exchequer.

The feudal administration of the Mughals extracted the revenue for plunder and pleasure. The police state in the British period was not interested in welfare. Colonial empire and welfare never go together. The concept of welfare State towards which the activities of administration have to be channelized was not in the minds of the rulers.

Independent India expounded a social and economic philosophy of distributive justice and welfarism. This Constitutional vision of an egalitarian society did not create a civil service suited for the purpose. The administrative system remained, by and large, untouched. There have been no attempts to reform the system. It is quite remarkable that the basic framework of administration inherited from the British colonial rule has more or less remained in place. This continuity is all the more striking when one recalls the often quoted comment of Nehru in his autobiography that no new order can be built in India so long as the spirit of the Indian Civil Service pervades our administration and our public services". Yet the constitutional spirit seem to have thrown up individual views who strove to realize the vision. S.R. Sankaran is one such offshoots of constitutional vision of equity and justice.

The present study is an enquiry of this civil servant, S.R. Sankaran, to hold a deeper understanding of the administrative culture of this model, the "empathetic model". This model is an indigenous one thrown by indigenous social context and culture. A probing into this model suggests that the Weberian typologies are in exhaustive; Sankaran's politico-moral legal rational authority constitutes a complementary to the Weberian, typology, for his style is not the negation of the legal rational but goes beyond the boundaries of that form of

behavioral mode. This brings in merit but moves beyond the neutrality and even anonymity. It is a form where the administrator commits himself to a longer humane and democratic course.

In this “style” of administration, the discretion that authority rests on the position is wielded in favour of the poor. In the case of several other administrators, it is the other way round. The power used in favour of the privileged and powerful appears to be natural, for it does not challenge the given order. We also see an interface between positive power and power as a negative social and human relation.

Further, administration for Weber is synonymous with power, authority and domination. And the conflicts as far as organizations are concerned are rooted in power and authority and the entire domain of ethics revolves around these conflict. Power being the pursuit of the individual to influence the behaviour of the other, often leads to hierarchical tensions in interpersonal relations. In the ethico-legal-rational authority, driven by social purpose, power gets humanized. Once power acquires human face, goals of the organization get elevated to a higher order. In such an order, attitudinal conflicts either do not occur or get submerged in the longer processes. Hence, the present study is a modest attempt to explore into the ethico-legal-rational authority, how their moral sensibilities and human concerns provide a counter-balancing force to the authoritarian and conflicting influence of power. Even in the absence of legal-rational, the moral gets penetrated. The penetration of moral is seen in the formation of the Committee of Concerned Citizens.<sup>85</sup> The CCC is a body through which he has been striving continuously to democratize not only the state but also the civil society and the people’s movements. In Andhra Pradesh, CCC stood as one of the prominent democratic voices. The peace talks, negotiations that happened demonstrate the legitimacy that the ethico-rational model enjoys – from the state, civil society and the people’s movement.

The western organizational theories during the last century and a half grappled more with the question of standards of work. In the industrial organizations, innovations became possible as they were engaged in the production. Fredrick Taylor’s<sup>86</sup>, scientific management conducted in search of scientific method or Elton Mayo’s<sup>87</sup> Hawthorne experiment in human relations did throw up new light on the human side of the organization. The subsequent

socio-physiological improvements were mainly geared to the production raising activity. There have been, of course, some breakthroughs in organization theory and practice. But these exercises were indifferent to two important questions: 1) how do we develop organizations, which are socially sensitive, 2) how to organize the work, which can give greater scope and meaning to individual human person without undermining the collective identity or purpose. In other words, social sensitivity of the functionaries received no attention. It is surprising that neither the early structuralists nor the analysts raised philosophical questions relating to the meaning of work. With the result, the work of the early structuralists got reduced to a mechanical level and contribution of the behaviouralist thinkers left these fundamental questions untouched. For instance, Chester Bernard<sup>88</sup> raised the question about authority and its basis, but did not ask questions, such as whether the authority is indispensable to a human system of work and whether the structure of dominance to which human beings are subjected can be eliminated at all. Simon's laborious search on the rationality of the organization concentrates more on the process of the organization than on the purpose. He devotes no attention to the moral question. Thus, we get more insights from the organizational theories for raising the production, but cannot get equally useful insights for humanizing and democratizing work itself. In the absence of adequate academic exercise in this domain, an attempt is made in this direction to abridge the existing gap by way of building an indigenous theory by indigenous social context and culture.

The study, while venturing into the working of the new 'ethos' in administration, which could transcend narrow bureaucratic modes of behavior, throws a unique experience of the administrator working with the people, the suffering and the oppressed and giving them the necessary strength. It, therefore, attempts to understand the phenomenon in its larger context and also as a part of administrative continuity. How under objective conditions of structural constraints, volatile politics and rampant bureaucratic corruption throughout his service he was able to maintain and sustain ethics.

A comprehensive understanding of the literature surveyed reveals – there is a widespread politicization of bureaucracy. In fact, we find undue interference by the political parties and the ministers in the processes of administration, which is affecting the efficiency and integrity of the organization as a whole. Not only have the bureaucrats been brought wholly under the authority of the politicians, at times, the politicians have even used the

bureaucrats for their own political and personal ends. Politicians always felt there was no law above them.

The bureaucracy, on its part, has shown willingness to be co-opted in the political system. Such a willingness on the part of the bureaucracy stems from its expectation that it can reap the benefits it wants only by developing proper links with the political leaders who are the real repositories of power and arbiters of reward and punishment.

It is extensively documented that bureaucracy is less useful as administrators are insensitive and unresponsive and less developmental. It is also recorded that a large section of the marginalized have 'become victims of biases. In sum, the dominant discourse on bureaucracy is that it is insular, arrogant, inaccessible and the main stumbling block in the path to administrative and economic reforms. The public in large it is candidly confessed is one of inaccessibility, indifference, procedure-oriented, biased and sluggishness and smart of enterprise. They were status conscious. Their styles of leadership, supervision or motivation were to armchair and out of the time with the realities of the prevailing situation and most importantly, they had no faith in anti-poverty and asset distribution programmes.

A summary of all the studies on bureaucracy that has been surveyed as a part of literature review reveals the nature of Indian Bureaucracy – which is colonial in nature, primarily of a predatory role, in pursuit of self-interest, class character, lumpen and copradore, apathetic to the needs of the poor.

The present study is a counter-evidence to the dominant discourse(s) on bureaucracy. How under objective conditions such as changing nature of the structure, repressive, reactionary and at times responsive. In other words structural constraints have become a convenient pointer to the agents for the choice of their behaviour. It is the attributes and subjective preference of an individual and that can make a difference. Hence, a pro-poor oriented bureaucrat implemented programmes in spite of the prevailing political and administrative system. We study here the administrative response of Sankaran who worked for the constituency of the poor, pushing boundaries forward within the system by making subjective preferences.

## **S.R. Sankaran – A Profile:**

Sankaran was born in the old Madras Presidency in 1934. After obtaining a B.Com. Degree with first class Honors from Madras University in 1954, he worked as a Lecturer for three years in Madurai. Sankaran joined the IAS in 1957 and was allotted to the Andhra Pradesh cadre among his important positions are Collector and District Magistrate (1963–69) special Assistant to union Ministry for Steel and Mines (1971–75) Secretary Social Welfare Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh (1976–78), Chief Secretary Government of Tripura (1978–84), Principal Secretary Social Welfare Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh and Secretary Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India (1990–92). Sankaran enriched every office that he occupied. In his three and half decades of administrative service, he was closely associated with the welfare of the poor. Even after his retirement in 1992, he got himself engaged in addressing the problem of poverty and deprivation and initiated the formation of the committee of concerned citizens, one of the prominent Human Rights group in Andhra Pradesh to bring back people's aspirations and the right to live with dignity on to the agenda of the Naxalite Movements and the government. Besides this he was also the President of Bharathiya Gyana Vignyana Samithi and engaged in numerous social interventions.

Sankaran has been prolific in his writings and speeches. He was a frequent guest lecturer at various institutions of learning and training, the civil services trainees at the Lal Bahadur Sastri Academy of Administration, Mussoorie, where he went frequently as a resource person, are inspired by his humane appreciation of the problems of the poor and his radical thinking on the issues of Socio-economic development.

While himself not born in a dalit or poor family, he imparted a fresh and significant turn to the path of socio-economic development and protection of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and poor as a whole.

His pioneering and inspiring work and his leadership to the upcoming generations of weaker sections and their sympathizers, his networking with and guidance of non-governmental organizations and activists in this field, his contribution as an expert in this area through his papers, articles and lectures, unraveling the functional role and working of

the Indian caste system and the remedies open to the SC, ST and poor through governmental, voluntary and community efforts, clearly mark him out as a symbol of struggle for social justice.

In recognition of his distinguished career, his innovative mind and his humane value system, Sri Venkateshwara University, at the thirty eighth annual convocation, 30 December 1996 honoured him with the Degree of Doctor of Letters, *Honoris Causa*.

In recognition of his work in the Indian civil Service and for the legitimacy he gave to the Indian state the Indian Government awarded Padma Bhushan which he declined in a fraction of second for the moral reason that it was indeed his duty.

### **Scope and Methodology:**

The present study subscribes to ethnography as the method. This is a visible mode of enquiry into the organization, culture, individual, community and society under study. It studies, describes and examines a particular phenomenon with the help of case studies, group discussions, interview method and participative observation. Narratives have been an important source of information. It is qualitative in terms of its focus on the unique and examines the universal elements in the model. As regards the sampling design, the size of the sample was purposive as availability of the beneficiaries and the officials constituted the sample. The study also used both random and stratified sampling. To study the abolition of bonded labours, released bonded labourers were identified for the purpose. Similarly to understand the agency response to the atrocities on dalits at Karamchedu, the victims of Karamchedu were interviewed.

In every chapter the site of enquiry differed, for example when working on District collector Nellore District was selected. Similarly his work as Secretary social welfare for two tenures in the state of Andhra Pradesh Medak District was selected as it had the largest bonded labours, alongside a select few districts were also covered randomly to collect information relating to land reforms and other social welfare programmes.

To understand the agents response to the rights of the victims of atrocity of Karamchedu, a place called Vijayanagar Colony in Chirala was site of study. In order to study his works in Tripura as Chief Secretary, the State of Tripura was visited.

To study his post superannuation works a number of activists involved in his mega projects were interviewed. Official archives such as tour reports, collector's diary, public grievance documents, government orders which constitute are important source of information and evidence. The study also relied on secondary sources too like available literature (journals, texts, autobiographies of civil servant, Magazines for theoretical underpinnings. This is an explanatory as well as exploratory study. It not only explains Sankaran's administrative style and approach to the poor but also tries to trace and his personality traits. It is a hypothesis generating study, rather than an adequate analysis of the phenomenon.

### **Field Experience:**

Since the study is centred-around primary source, extensive field study was indispensable. Starting from Nellore (a district in AP) where he worked as Collector down to Social Welfare Secretary Government of Andhra Pradesh, touching Tripura where he worked as Chief Secretary and thereafter his superannuation and the formation of CCC and as Convener leaves an impressive experience. The task was challenging too because it was something unique in its content and was carried out in different parts of the State of Andhra Pradesh and Tripura after many years of his service. A wide range of villages and cross section of people includes bureaucrats, colleagues (who worked with him in different capacities and in different ministries, a few of them are still holding positions in the government, on an average, 38 IAS & IPS officers were interviewed, beneficiaries, members from the NGO, social activists and politicians formed the target group.

The study from the bottom down (as Collector) to top-up (in all positions that he served thereafter) received passionate-emotional and intellectual legitimacy respectively. Each interview lasted for more than an hour. Each chapter has its own field study. All through the field journey, there was one chorus predominantly, about his pro-poor activities – land distribution, asset creating and asset building, which people recalled with fresh memories as



if it happened the previous day. It is amazing to learn his deeds as the beneficiaries across the field recalled with emotion and gratitude. Their eyes wetted up with tears of gratitude. People generously lavished their affection and respect as they ‘felt the government servant had tried to work fairly and honestly in bringing a metamorphosis in their lives and putting the poor on the developmental agenda of the nation. Unprecedented was the collective memory of the beneficiaries and staff of the different organizations at all levels, which so accurately corroborated with the official records. For example, the distribution of pattas, settlement of land disputes, eviction of unauthorized lands, release and rehabilitation of bonded labourers, victims of atrocities, etc. If this is the case at the State of Andhra Pradesh, in Tripura, it is the sustainable package for the rehabilitation of different tribes. **They recalled with nostalgia the State Rural employment Programme as Sankaran’s Rural Employment Programme and National Rural employment programme as Nripen Chakravarthys’ Rural employment programme.**

Long hours were put in during the visits to the villages. The standard practice in the field or area under the study (villagers were to assemble at a central spot where many people gathered and the elders, at times, the literate or educated gave us the required details. A few of them started talking without even being asked – there is a need they felt for a public narrative of the deeds and also of their suffering due to bureaucracy. In other words, in such a study, public narrative is at least partly to impress a particular point of view on the state and its agents.

I was asked repeatedly to come a little further to this village or the next to listen more about or meet so and so for the data. Thus, the chain continued in this way randomly twenty villages were studied in two innings for understanding his works as District Collector, Nellore.

As Secretary Social Welfare, Government of Andhra Pradesh to understand his pioneering work on abolition of bonded labour, eight villages were randomly selected from Medak District as Medak had the largest number of bonded labours. In addition a few other districts were also touched in the state of Andhra Pradesh to understand the implementation of social welfare programmes of Sankaran.

To understand Sankaran's response towards atrocities on the Dalits of Karamchedu, the victims of Karamchedu were identified along with dalit activists of the region who were active during the Karamchedu carnage.

My fifty days stay at Tripura to study his work as Chief Secretary of Tripura... is no less an experience. The familiarity of the people to the bureaucrat could be attributed not only to his frequent visits to the villages but in creating assets. In Tripura, it is recorded (official archive), he visited a place in South Tripura – Jamanthia Para – as many as twenty times.

What is quite painful is the community/group of people approaching the researcher as a 'person of influence' and appeals to carry their owes to the government in general and Sankaran in particular for justice, relief and help.

This is only the tip of the ice-berg; field experience itself can form a big research note. Finally, the most difficult question of the researcher is how to write about such an experience.

Respondents – both beneficiaries and officials at all levels – enriched the study by their deep involvement in the subject of inquiry.

For the danger of over dramatizing this, rendering the work quite subjective, this hazard is taken care of consciously, as the researcher does not belong to the configuration as does Sankaran. Thus, surrendering to the demands of an academic discourse of sanitizing and naturalizing.

### **Chapterisation:**

The first chapter is on Introduction to the study which covers the review of literature and the reason for the present case study of a civil servant.

The second chapter traces the origin of the office of the District collector, its continuity in style, the difference an individual officer can make in the lives of the poor given the autonomy. This chapter therefore discusses the works of Sankaran as the collector of Nellore District.

The third chapter discusses the role of the agency in fulfilling the constitutional vision of the Nation, primarily to establish an egalitarian social order through programmes such as land reforms, distribution of land to the landless poor, abolition of bonded labour and in setting various socio-economic agendas for the amelioration of the poor as secretary social welfare Government of Andhra Pradesh. In his second tenure as Principal secretary government of Andhra Pradesh during which period state atrocities on Dalits were found to be common in Andhra Pradesh. This chapter also discusses the intervention of the agency in favour of the victims in the absences of any special package for rehabilitation. The case of Karamchedu is discussed here. This is a place where atrocities on dalits took place in 1985.

The fourth chapter brings out the role of Sankaran as Chief Secretary of Tripura. In an autonomous position at the state, as Chief Secretary Government of Tripura with Nripen Chakraborty as the Chief Minister; this chapter explains how the state and the agency (combination) worked to push the constitutional mandate forward widening the developmental horizon of the backward state like Tripura.

The fifth chapter discusses post superannuation moral public engagement of Sankara - the formation of Committee of Concerned Citizens (1995–2005), a body through which he was trying to negotiate between the government of Andhra Pradesh and the Naxalites, this chapter attempts to explain how in the absence of legal-rational authority the moral manifested in the attempt to bridge the gap between the state and the civil society. His yet another important effort was as National Convener Safai Karamachari Andholan. He allied himself with the most marginalized and demanded for states intervention in a determined activist style.

The sixth chapter attempts to capture Sankaran's concerns on various issues as reflected in his writings and speeches. A few the important ones' relevant to the study have been covered for the purpose.

Conclusion of the work, which sums up the findings of the thesis.

### **Objectives of the Study:**

To trace the history of welfare administration in India and to comprehend Sankaran as an offshoot of constitutional vision of equity and justice.

It discusses the structure agency debate and attempts to explore possibilities of these agencies making a differences to the larger structure and institutions notwithstanding the constraints or do they given to the structure to determine their behavioral choice.

To analyze the Weberian typologies of power and to examine the adequacies of the typologies to Indian context

### **Limitations of the Study:**

Due to time and space constraints, the study has not been able to cover entire spectrum of Sankaran's administrative career. Its scope is limited only to his administrative response to the rights of the poor with respect to a few select areas and programmes. This study does not attempt to analyze any other variables the politico-economic system of his time. In the wake of the new economic policy and the diminishing role of state and its agencies in welfare activities, present study can generate fresh hypothesis on which various debates on administrative culture could be explored.

The study has not attempted to describe and analyze the 'private' of Sankaran. In the absence of marriage and family and given his deep commitment and conviction, his entire life is located in the public domain. The private life of Sankaran is largely his moral. His moral sensibilities and human concerns provide a counter-balancing force to the authoritarian and corrupting influence of power. This interface between 'positive power' and power as a negative social and human relation needs deeper probing. This study did not venture into these domains. Further the study has covered Sankaran's work right from his District Collector's position to his post superannuation work, excepting his work as Secretary MORD, as the data for this was not accessible ---and went beyond researchers' capabilities.

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## Chapter - 2

### District Collectors' Response to the Rights of the Marginalized

Sankaran served as sub-collector Nandyal, joint collector Nellore and as District Collector Nellore. An attempt is made to explain how Sankran as a District Collector was able to use his autonomous position to respond to the rights of the marginalized, particularly in empowering them with rural assets. As a District collector he discharged his duty with sensitivity for the poor, maintained personal integrity and showed grit to resist political pressure. Thus creating space for the poor and the marginalized people aggrieved by class bias. This chapter is an effort to explain his activities as district collector of Nellore.

The post of a District Collector is a 'dream post' – every young officer dreams to reach that position. In the hierarchy of the administrative positions, as the head of the nation, State, and District, the sequence is – Prime Minister, Chief Minister and District Magistrate. As Collector Magistrate, he combines in himself the power of collector, judiciary and magistracy. Perhaps no other position in the Indian administrative scene is as challenging as that of a District Collector. No other job perhaps is designed to bring out the best in the person who holds it. It is in the district setting that the Collector 'understands' himself. His dormant energies are transformed into an awakened and vibrant consciousness and his inner potentialities find a myriad of opportunities to express themselves to the full. If at all he fails, it is the failure of his total 'self'. Precisely because of this it is quite often said that no other institution in India is as much shrouded in the mystery and magic of majestic epithets as the Collector. It can therefore be hypothesized without much risk that in India the task of the District Collector has much greater freedom of action than what is found in most other executive jobs in the government sector.

As the agent of the Government he represents the Government. It is often put, he/she is the 'eyes' (in fact the arms too of the Government in the district. His visions are accorded great weight in the formulation of policies at the policy making and implementation level. 'The actions or feelings of the men on the ground reveal the presence, or absence of policies laid down from above'<sup>1</sup>. For an average man he is 'Government' (seen as *Ma Bap* at one level and as individual officer at another level and it is in this capacity that he expects the

District Officer to improve the quality of life, to transfer from 'existence' to 'being'. In the modern political parlance, to protect their rights, in their view, he epitomizes the entire Indian bureaucracy, and as leader of the team, as well as the nearest point of interaction, he is blamed for any delay and denial of the goods. In other words, the responsive, repressive and reactionary nature of the bureaucracy and the Government in general is felt by the public at this level. He should not only present the Government to the people but also the people back to the Government.

Thus the position of a Collector provides for a person to emerge as a personality more effective in carrying the administrative tasks. It is true that bureaucratic organization is a network of rules, procedures and structure designed to promote objectivity in administrative policies and decision-making, yet it is an accepted maxim that the personality traits-attitudes, orientations, motivations, predilections and prejudices of administrators-do bear an imprint on the character of the organization they administer.

Most studies on this subject, however, have been legalistic and formalistic with particular emphasis on the nature of multi-functionality of this key officer. Their repressiveness and failure to deliver the goods have also emerged from the corridors of academics and activism. What such studies miss is, notwithstanding the culture of anonymity, civil servants in a country such as India do have an imprint of their personalities and performance on administration. The twin volumes of *The Men who Ruled India* by Philip Woodruff<sup>2</sup> underscore the point that the administrative acumen of individual civil servants immensely influences the pattern, productivity and orientation of administrative system.

The present chapter studies empirically how Sankaran's personality and performance as Collector made a difference to the organization and the lives of the poor. The work is divided into two sections: One discusses the origin and purpose of the Office of the Collector, elements of change and continuity and the second provides evidence from the field substantiating the works of Sankaran.

## **PURPOSE AND EVOLUTION OF THE OFFICE OF DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION – A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

The present office is the creation of the British rule in India. It dates back to the year 1772 when the East India Company had made the historic decision to (in the words of the Board of Directors of the Company “stand forth as diwan and to take upon themselves, by the agency of their own servants, the entire care and administration of the revenue” and appointed Collectors to superintend the revenue collections and to preside in the Courts<sup>3</sup> Steadily the district collectors authority and power increased, and before long he emerged as the pivot of district administration, representing the Government in its totality. The duty of assessing and collecting the land revenue, which originally imparted to this office its title, was by no means his only duty, the district combined in himself the roles of collector, judge and magistrate. By this the Collector’s power reached its culmination.

It was this absolute power attributed to him that he became arbitrary and corrupt. In 1828, Holt Mackenzine, Secretary to the Government of Bengal, reported that “a large number of cases of embezzlement and defalcation of public money. The Mutiny<sup>4</sup> of 1857, which rudely shook the British Government from their complacency is attributed partly to the “British officials not being in touch with the people and that they could not be trusted”<sup>5</sup>. This led to a reaction in favour of the direct or personal system.

The East Indian Company was terminated and the British Crown took upon itself the direct responsibility of the administration of the empire in India. From 1859, the Collector became the District Officer, the sole ruler of his area and was the representative of the Government in the District. Such a transfer of power did not radically modify either the structures nor the statutory powers and functions of the District Officer. The District Officer was in fact, responsible for different Departments but lacked control. The Collector did continue to be the sole executive in-charge of the district. He was the principal revenue official and Chief Magistrate in the area under his charge. In him efficient use of this power lies the survival of the British Government in India and Britain precisely because of this he became an essential factor in British rule.

A comprehensive understanding of the evolution of the Office of District Collector suggests two things. One right from its origin / inception it is being vested with enormous powers. We also see incremental increase in power – from collector of revenue to judicial and magistracy. The District Officer was an immensely powerful officer. All the threads of control in the district passed through his hands. The Collector in practice was a semi-absolute monarch ruling over a territory as extensive in area and population as Waleser Scothand. He represented the Might of the British power. Lord Cornwallis who was committed to the principle of separation of powers was threatened by such a concentration of power in the hands of the individual. He regarded it as a menace to the liberty and property of the people. Such absolute power, accorded to him, excites terror in the minds of the people instead of inspiring them with confidence in its protection<sup>6</sup>. Two, the purpose of such a power was minimal, single purpose of maintaining law and order and collecting revenue. It is manifestly clear from the numerous accounts by ICS men of their work in this sphere that they took a definite position in administering law and order. It was British law and order that they were bending their energies to maintain not anyone elses<sup>7</sup>.

Such a power was entrusted to check the emergence of rebellions and revolts to reorder the society. The overall objective of the colonial state – extraction of surplus without slightest hindrance such an assignment of power was indispensable. It is aptly pointed by ICS men that “the district administration has the pier of the bridge over which the colonial rule rested”<sup>8</sup>.

## **POST-INDEPENDENT INDIA’S ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE: MORE OF CONTINUITY AND LESS OF CHANGE**

The basic foundation of the British administrative machinery was the ICS whose officials were well trained in the law and the customs of the land and the art of administration and lived a life far removed from that of the common people. The structure values and work ways of administration were all created to this end and well suited to the aims of the colonial power. Solomon’s account illustrates that the “formal overall control of the state structures were maintained at different levels, they were in positions to frame new

rules and bring changes in policy measures. Important of all they were to ensure that the basic rules of the Raj were maintained”<sup>9</sup>.

The colonial empire because of its requirements exhibited enormous power and position of the ICS men, those acquiring unique status, contributing to it becoming an institution that was considered outside the society and not a part of it. To these men in position bureaucracy symbolized power and authority. Being highly educated and occupying powerful and prestigious positions, the bureaucrats constituted the elite part of the society having elitist attitude and objectives. “They shared alienation from the masses and their native cultural traditions and developed distinct style and modes of living and thought which separated them from the general masses”<sup>10</sup>. The bureaucracy inherited by the British in India was anti-people. Not only were pro-people values and attitudes considered weak but the bureaucratic culture were found in rules, regulations, procedures, mechanism and basic management practices were followed. Civil servants were more oriented towards the ruling class which reinforced their primary concern of protection and promotion of the imperial interests. This orientation largely shaped the administrative culture during the British period. Many texts that deal with this period have used the term “steel frame” for, the service because of the regulatory and dominative character. The suggestive nature of that phrase was obvious and that the ICS were the main bulwark of the British administration and was often considered that he was a dedicated man, dedicated to the task of keeping the British flag flying in India.

Sadly enough the arbitrary and undemocratic state power exercised through bureaucratic apparatus coupled with enormous economic backwardness on the one hand and growing consciousness of the people on the other gave rise to the anti-colonial freedom movement. But the freedom movement did not throw up any viable alternative form of governance except the Gandhian Model which had no social base whatsoever.

The entire freedom movement got reduced to mere transfer of power. Once power was transferred, the lack of clarity about the administrative institutions became our legacy. The constituent assembly which sat for two years to give a blue print for Independent India, did not seriously debate about the changes to be introduced in the administrative structure, even though it redefined the goals of the polity.

Mahavir Tyagi who participated in the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly rightly observed “that the country fought not against the British but the bureaucracy and people wanted to be free from it. Now the very same bureaucracy stands as it is. He emphasized that Government should not be allowed to run by persons who are mercenaries, who come and offer their intellectual talent on time”. His words however had no impact on the constituent assembly. The administrative system remained by and large untouched. Much before Tyagi, the leaders of Indian National Congress made it clear during their struggle for independence that “the ICS was the instrument of the imperial power and that they wanted to abolish the ICS and all it stood for. Jawaharlal Nehru was “quite sure” in 1934 that no new order can be built in India so long as the spirit of the ICS persists our administration and our public services, it being therefore essential that the ICS and similar services must disappear completely”<sup>11</sup>.

Yet when the British left in the 1940s and the new Indian Government took over with Nehru as Prime Minister ICS Indians (with their traditions were invited to stay on. Nehru and his colleagues sought to build ‘a new India, a more egalitarian society through the agency of those who had been the trained servants of imperialism is paradoxical.

In the years afterwards the ICS traditions not only survived but prospered. In the spring of 1964 Nehru was asked at a private meeting with some friends what he considered to be his greatest failure as India’s first Prime Minister. He reportedly replied “I could not change the administration, it is still a colonial administration”<sup>12</sup>. Nehru then went on to elaborate his belief that the continuation of that colonial administration was one of the main causes of India’s administration before and after independence shows administrative continuities across 1947 and explains the consequence of these continuities for the modern Indian state. The focus is primarily on the Indian Civil Services and its successor, the Indian Administrative service. The entire exercise of explaining how the state forms are reproduced through time despite changes in the political environment<sup>13</sup>.

Post independent India’s District Officer was called upon to face the new challenges created by the new milieu. Of the many challenges significant was, the District Officer was to work in a political framework who also represented the people. This, however, did not

cease his powers in many ways nor did he cease to be the sole representative of Government in the district.

With the increase in socio-economic legislations his challenges exponentially increased corresponding to it was his functions too. “The duty of assessing and collecting the land revenue which originally imparted to this office its title, was by no means his only duty; which has always remained more undefined than defined”<sup>14</sup>.

India was accompanied with all her backwardness when she won her independence. The egalitarian vision of the polity was to be achieved through its agencies. The directive principles of state policy envisaged a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, will inform all institutions of national life, the responsibility for achieving which is enjoined on the state and the agencies of the state. Studies on Indian bureaucracy at all levels suggest that the constitutional vision of an egalitarian society did not create a civil service suited for the purpose. The administrative system remained, by and large, untouched. There have been no attempts to reform the system. Yet the constitutional spirit seem to have thrown up individuals who strove to realize the vision. S.R. Sankaran is one such off shoots of constitutional vision of equity and justice.

### **About the District—Nellore:**

The District is situated in South Eastern part of the State of Andhra Pradesh. The District derives its name from the extensive paddy cultivation in and around the District. Nello means paddy and ur means ‘town’. Erstwhile Nellore had 14 Revenue Divisions and 21 Panchayath Samithies. Sankaran worked as Joint Collector (1963-4 and Collector Magistrate (1968-9

In both his tenures, as joint collector and District magistrate he pushed forward with unusual effectiveness the vision of constitutional mandate of an egalitarian society, through the agenda of land reforms, land ceiling, taking over of surplus land of the large land owners and evicting the rich land lords from their encroachments and assigning them to the poor.



### **Cases dealt by Sankaran – Field Evidences:**

This section presents the evidence from the field of the transformative role Sankaran played. A summary of each case is presented below; however, these are only a few of many such initiatives.

#### **Encroachment and Eviction:**

##### **CASE I:**

This case is quite popular in Nellore district and Kovur Taluk as Ramnaiha vs Penaboha Rami Reddy case. P. Rami Reddy, a rich ryot had encroached acres and acres of land. In Dampur Village of Kovur Taluk alone he had 60.5 acres of wet land. In addition to this he was in unlawful possession of government lands, one such being an extent of 2.90 acres in Survey Nos. 422, 415 and 417 which was in possession by this landlord since 1955. One Sri N. Ramanaiha, a serving soldier of the same village was sending petitions for the grant of land in the above mentioned survey nos. since 1966 onwards, as he has no land of his own and his salary was insufficient to maintain the family. No action was initiated by the Thasildar, Revenue Inspector or the then Collector of Nellore for almost two and a half years, as the landlord was influential and had prevailed upon the Thasildar preventing him in disposing the case for a long time.

When the file came to the notice of S.R. Sankaran, the Thasildar of Kovur was forced to initiate action and in a record period of a week all enquiries and details regarding the land and investigation were completed. When the reports revealed that the land was encroached, the Collector passed orders of eviction and granted the land to serving soldier on Eksal lease for cultivation pending permanent assignment. This was done to strengthen the hands of the poor soldier relieving him from the torture of the landlord. P.Rami Reddy being highly influential, petitioned to the Board of Revenue and the Revenue Minister, Late Thimma Reddy, alleging that the eviction proceedings were effected without following due procedure although the notices under Section-7 of the Land Encroachment Act 1905 were served. Anticipating the notices, Rami Reddy absconded from the village, avoiding receiving

of notices personally in spite of it being sent thrice. The Collector was forced to affix the notice on the poles in the fields. Although this formed the main contention, it was too late for the Board of the Revenue or Minister to stop the proceedings: The Board directed the Collector to stop the proceedings and permit the landlord to continue in possession of the lands in question only if the eviction rules were not followed. Orders were issued from the Office of the Revenue Minister to stop the dispossession of the land from Rami Reddy. What is interesting is that the expeditious action with which the work was done in favour of the serving soldier prevented the undue political, illegal and unlawful interferences installing the land allotment.

Rami Reddy tried hard to get stay orders for the second time from the Revenue Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh, but the land was taken over and handed over to the soldier. The same was sent to the Secretary, Department of Revenue through the Board of Revenue. The land thus allotted was in trouble as the landlord used his muscle men to manhandle and threaten the soldier's family. He let his cattle's and destroyed the whole crop which was about to be harvested. When this was brought to the notice of the Collector, the landlord was not only warned of stern action (both verbally and in writing, forced to compensate for the loss of crop. The only source of irrigation was closed. Alternatives were searched from Duvvuru Channel.

In due course of time, favourable orders for the permanency in assignment was granted. The allottee and his family were assured of protection. They were asked to inform the Tahsildar so that he could go with sufficient police force and protect his rights on land. P. Rami Reddy failed in his machinations. The Superintendent of Police of the district was directed to warn the landlord. Necessary police protection was given to the family for a couple of days. This action on the part of the Collector prevented the recurrence of the heinous act of the landlord<sup>15</sup>.

## **CASE II:**

The Anams and Bejawadas are big landlords in Nellore district. They were top two of the 14 powerful families who owned educational institutions, Mica mines, rice mills, big hotels and real estate business. For ages, they were contractors of arrack and public works, not only in Nellore but in Madras too. This group continuously gave rise to a new class which

can broadly be categorized as 'lumpen class'. This class was not only close to the power centres but monopolized power from 'bottom up to top down'. Members of this family (even today were Sarpanchas, Village Chairmen, Presidents; one of the Bejawadas' brothers Bejawada Pappi Reddy was the MLA from Nellore constituency, and of the Anams, Anam Sanjeeva Reddy was the Civil Supplies Minister in Brahmananda Reddy's cabinet.

Bejawada Ramachander Reddy had encroached upon an extent of 1006 acres of Government land in Kovur Taluk- Varuni village, and was cultivating the same for the previous 32 years. When this came to the notice of S.R. Sankaran during his inspections, she initiated action for eviction. Bejawada Ramachander Reddy claimed that he purchased these 'forestlands' in auction sale and appealed for grant of Ryotwari *pattas*. Strangely enough neither the purchasers nor their successors claimed pattas during the previous 32 years. Hence, this occupation was treated as Sivajamin. The petitioner failed to either establish his claim or produce evidence sufficient for establishing their title. His appeal for grant of pattas was rejected.

Bejawada Ramachander Reddy attempted to tap all sources of power and mobilize his forces to stop the proceedings of the Collector went in vain. Noting, no force howsoever powerful could move or bend the Collector, for the Collector had sufficient reasons for eviction, which was established through meticulous investigation and proper enquiries leaving little space for any manipulation. Not only was the appeal for grant of pattas rejected and proceedings of the case disposed off, the Thasildar, Kovur, was instructed to evict the petitioner immediately as they are landed rich ryots in unauthorized occupation of the Government-assessed waste lands and the same lands he allotted to the landless poor SCs and Girijans in conformity with the revised assignment policy of the Government.

Bejawada Ramchander Reddy's eviction was considered a landmark action in the history of Nellore district as it not only checked arrogance and unlawful power of his community but the amazing pace shown in the work. What could not happen for 27 years happened in a week's time<sup>16</sup>.

### **CASE III:**

In Jargumbally village of Kandakurtaluk, Chennu Rami Reddy, Minister for Municipal administration Brahmananda Reddy's cabinet had encroached into 20.50 acres of patta land allotted to SCs who were cultivating it for several years. Having heard of the Collectors pro-poor concerns the allottees petitioned for restoration of the land. Action was initiated on the land. Several of Minister's supporters resisted the move. No pressure could stop the action. Eviction orders were served; the Minister refused to receive it. A couple of attempts were made to resend the orders but the Minister refused to receive the notice. The notice was pasted on the poles in the fields and on the doors of his house. The Minister rang up the Collector to send the notice again; the Collector answered the Minister to look on the poles of the field and his door. The Ministers request that the notice be re-sent was declined as there were several attempts made earlier in this direction. Further, the Collector sensed the risk of re-sending the notice and possibility that the Minister would use the time to get stay order as political pressure did not work. Having failed at the District level to save his face, he moved the High Court. It was too late for any power to change things in favour of the Minister.

In the meanwhile the crop was ready for harvesting. The Collector got the crop (cusurina harvested, auctioned and the money was credited to the revenue account. The allottees were given complete police protection to cultivate the land <sup>17</sup>.

### **CASE IV:**

A few landless Scheduled castes families from Attalapalem village of Sulerpet taluk had applied for assignment of land that they were cultivating for many years. The land under their possession was between the FTI and MWL of the tank level. When action was initiated for assignment, the village landlords opposed it maintaining that the land was under the tank and cannot be treated as waste land. Further, the landlords approached the Board of Revenue against the Collector's orders. The Collector along with the Tahsildar of the Taluk and Revenue Inspector inspected the site and briefed the Board of Revenue about the actual status of the land. Significant of all was the investigation that was done with the help of the irrigation and the Public Works Departments showed that the tank was never full even in the best of rainy season. Hence the land could be viewed as waste and transferable-from tank

*poramboke to ayan*. The Board of Directors upheld the orders of the Collector and dismissed the appeal; what was striking in this case was that the entire survey was done just in a day with the help of the District surveyor. This reduced the uncertainty of the Landless poor who were anxious about the land<sup>18</sup>.

#### **CASE V:**

Nazeria Transports were occupying an extent of 7095 sq. ft. or 98.5 ankanas for the past many years and were gradually encroaching the portion of the street and converting the entire area into private property. The approximate value of the extent of land under encroachment was more than Rs. 30,000. Since this place is at the heart of Nellore town's busy commercial area, their lands were never useful to the Government for any public purpose. It became quite impossible at this stage to put the occupied portions to public use or street formations. Hence, the land was auctioned and money credited to the Revenue Department<sup>19</sup>.

#### **Cases of Assignment and Distribution of Land:**

While these above cases illustrate the eviction of encroachments, the following account presents the land distribution and assignment of pattas pending since decades. In Venkatagiri taluk alone there were a number of occupations on the border of the revenue forest by the poor. They were harassed by the forest authorities although the authorities were aware that these occupations had taken place in the pre-1964 period and the revised forest policy protects the 1964 occupations in the reserve forests as long as they were not detrimental to the forest. For all the cases falling in this category, proceedings were issued authorizing the occupants to continue and measures were initiated for permanent assignment. In all these cases an extent of 50.30 acres were occupied by 21 Girijan families of Melchur Village in Permali reserve forest and extent of 31.00 acres occupied by 21 SC families of Bhyravaram in Perimide reserve forest were assigned to them<sup>20</sup>.

## **CASE I:**

In Nellore district, there were certain lands which were under long standing occupation of the landless poor, belonging mostly to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The forest officers continuously harassed the poor during the forest settlement operations. A few of them demanded “palms to be greased”, in many cases, they were threatened of dire consequences if they continued in occupation. These poor lived a life of fear and uncertainty, for they would be evicted at any time. In one of the cases the forest department took action against those landless poor for committing an offence under the Forest Act (they had moved a little of the boundary. In one of his inspections the victims briefed the Collector of the harassment. The first instance was that of Melchur village of Venkatgiri Taluk. Twenty One Yanadies were in occupation of 50.30 acres for a very long time in an area included in Perimidi Reserve Forest. Day in and day out they were asked to leave. After a through survey, Sankaran sent a report warning the Forest Department that the land was at one end of the Reserve forest boundary and adjoins the trunk road connecting Naidupet-Venkatgiri. These lands were clearly under settled cultivation for long, and irrigated from an irrigation source which was also repaired. He therefore, suggested the forest department to exclude it from the forest area. Ultimately the land was assigned to the Sivai jamindars. A copy of the collectors’ proceedings was given to the yanadies (pending pattas to avert harassment from the forest officers till the pattas were issued. On 5 July 1969 the Collector’s proceedings were issued and on 11 July 1969 the pattas were assigned. The dates indicate the expeditious way the task was completed in Perimali Reserve Forest. And 31.00 acres of land cultivated by 21 Scheduled caste families of Bhyravaram in Perimide Reserve Forest was assigned to them.

An extent of 34-41 acres occupied by 28 Arudnaleya families of Bolavaripalem were authorized to continue cultivation through Collectors proceedings in just four days. Prompt action was taken for permanent assignment. There were a number of similar cases in villages like Dontalli, Kavali, Abmbapur, Adaviraju Palem, Udaigiri, Vetagiri, Perimidi Village. District Land assignment files Rc E4. 3250/69 Venkatagiritluk<sup>21</sup>.

Whenever forest officials visited these areas and warned them, they asserted “this was given to us by Sankaran and ask Sankaraiha, he will show the boundaries”<sup>88</sup>. In fact his correspondence shows that forest officers were warned for breach of law. All actions taken by him and proceedings regarding the land were immediately communicated to the head of the forest Department to avert harassment of the landless poor<sup>22</sup>.

#### **CASE II:**

For several years, the landless poor of Chenchugari Palem village –Kavali Taluk had been cultivating 150.00 acres of land. These lands have been under their S.J. occupants for several years. Although year after year they applied for assignment on one or the other grounds their appeal was rejected. This was brought to the notice of Sankaran when he camped at Kavali with a request for assignment of these lands. The lands which were under the S.J. occupants were also visited by Collector along with the Revenue Divisional Officer and Thasildar, Kavali. The Collector was “briefed with the problem” that the lands were not assigned, and wondered why these lands were not assigned for so many years. He instructed the Thasildar to put up the land transfer classification within seventeen days and, these petitioners were given assignments. In this particular village the nature of the land was not uniform and not easy for transfer. The 150 acres included four kinds of porombokes –namely 1. Tank porombokes 2.yope poromboke.3.Forest porombokes and Forest Reserve. Despite the difficulty in transfer-classification it was expedited and completed<sup>23</sup>.

#### **CASE III:**

The SCs, STs and other landless poor of Parlapalli village, Kovur taluk had petitioned to the Collector that the land was under their possession and were cultivating for the last 30 years and requested the classification of the land to be shifted from tank *poromboke to ayan*. The transfer and distribution of 59.42 acres which was under paddy cultivations for 30 years was effected classification and *pattas* was completed in 13 days in pursuance of the Collectors special instructions to the Thasildars<sup>24</sup>.

#### **CASE IV:**

A group of SCs and STs of Kesavaram Village-Kavali taluk had applied for grant of land which was under their occupation for a long time. The landless poor applied for the land

on 27 February 1969 and direction to the Thasildar and Revenue Divisional Officer was given on 29 February 1969 and statement of the village officers of Kesavaram was obtained on 8 March 1969, resolution of the Panchayat was adopted on 12 March 1969 and proposal for transfer and withdrawal of land from the control of panchayat was done. They were issued pattas on 14 March 1969<sup>25</sup>.

#### **CASE V:**

On the visit of Collector, Atmakur taluk, for inspection, in Suryapalem village of the taluk he found that 116 members were cultivating 60 acres of land and raised casurina plantation. It was an unregistered cooperative farming society which was formed about 15 years ago. No authorities in the Government had paid any attention to regularize the cooperative farming. The Collector felt it was desirable to grant land on long-term lease to the society and eventually register it for growing casurina plantation instead of converting the river *poromboke to ayan* and granting individual pattas<sup>26</sup>.

#### **CASE VI:**

The SCs, STs and the landless poor of Mungaladorivu Village, Nellore Taluk were cultivating 5-39 hectares measuring 99.23 acres for several years and they were under S.J. Occupants. When appealed to the authorities in the past, they raised objection to transfer the land from tank *poromboke to ayan*. Sankaran inspected the lands and on finding the tank was abandoned and was not useful as an irrigation source, he effected the assignment of land and the *pattas* were issued<sup>27</sup>.

#### **CASE VII:**

The landless poor of the village were cultivating the tank bed land for several years. The land was classified as tank *poromboke* in village records. The poor cultivators were requesting for transfer of land to ayan and assignment. The authorities consistently objected to the same, particularly the PWD, in consultation with the *karanams* and the village heads, who are generally anti-poor. The PWD considered tank bed cultivation objectionable and heavily penalized these people in the year 1964. Since then they stopped submitting proposals for land transfer. It was in July 1968 when the Collector inspected the land after the request



for a proposal, the Collector, after his inspection, in his proceedings ordered that- As the tank was abandoned long ago and stabilized cultivation has been going on for the past many years, the occupation was *ipso facto* deemed unobjectionable and that their silence for the past 25 years over continual cultivation of the entire tank poromboke in the village should itself be taken as the departmental consent of the PWD to the assignment and ordered that all such lands be regularized in the case of landless poor. In view of orders of the District Collector, the opinion of the PWD was not obtained and transfer proposals for 89.1 acres of land was immediately done, pending grant of pattas, which was done a week later<sup>28</sup>.

### **Sankaran's Concern for Land Distribution:**

From the cases illustrated, in the first part, dealing with encroachment and eviction shows how encroachments by rich landlords were not checked (if not, encouraged for decades and that they were in illegal possession of vast tracts of land. While the poor encroachers were harassed, the rich were protected. It therefore cannot be denied that many senior officers of the Government were pro-landlords, while the lower echelons of the Revenue administration apart from lacking integrity, were also under the sway of large landowners who wielded considerable political power.

Eviction and distribution are far more important than the immediate material achievements. It empowers the rural poor and attempts to democratize the society. Eviction and transfer of land cannot be seen as a physical act, it should be recognized that the transfer of land entails transfer of power. Evicting no less a person than Bejawada Papi Reddy carries political significance. It entails transfer of power, property and status from one group to another. The ownership of a plot of land endows the poor with self-respect, self-confidence and a sense of equality.

A comprehensive understanding of the two parts of the section-one, encroachment and eviction of the rich riots, and the other, denial in assignment of land and landownership rights-raises serious questions of administrative lapses, apathy and anti-poor gestures. How does one understand the paradox that for ages these rich encroachers were not checked and the poor not given their rights? The cases presented above in Part II of this section show that

some of the SJ. Occupants 'are older than living memory.' For decades their ownership rights had been withheld or denied for no worth a reason. A majority of them lived in unending insecurity, never sure when they will be displaced by local authorities or other powerful groups.

Finally the vigor through which the work was streamlined and implemented to protect the rights and interest of the landless poor left no opportunity for the vested interest to frustrate the implementation of the laws.

One of the measures initiated by the Government soon after Independence was the programme of land reforms. The distribution and redistribution of land in favour of the poor was not only a step towards egalitarian end, but it also aimed at empowering the rural poor. As a part of this strategy Sankarana bestowed attention on several land related programmes.

A massive land distribution programme was in vogue since 1968-69. The Collector, along with his staff, toured intensely and noticed the types of land; homestead farms, poromboke lands, tank beds of Nellore, unreserved forestlands. There was plenty of land available in Nellore.<sup>29</sup> The poor needed the support and guidance of the Government. These lands were transferred into assessed waste and distributed: 'Almost every village in the district received lands for cultivation, pattas, house sites, housing and other land development assistance'. A large number of respondents, beneficiaries, officials and the staff of the Revenue Department observed that, 'for the first time the poor and their needs were put on the developmental agenda of the district. Never before or after did the district witness such a massive work of land transformation. The SCs, STs and the poor received complete attention of the Collector. Despite resistance from the powerful landlords who were instruments of the 'structure', the programme saw no halt.

In Padugupadu Village of Kovur taluk, 150 acres of land was distributed for cultivation to 150 Girijans and these families were allotted 50 acres for housing. The heads of the village recall with gratitude, 'for ages we were staying on the fringes of the villages, usually on the plains of river beds, and frequently shifting due to eviction or extension of encroachment by the landlords. The slightest objection from the ryots would frighten us and we moved

immediately. Naduvedi Buchamma of this village an active tribal women since 1960 says ‘not owning any house sites we choose the Government canal bunds, or tank bunds for portable habitations. Year after year we faced the fury of the Nature, our roofs would get washed away. Quite often, ‘we are welcome to the villages only to fulfill obligations, but not when we claim our rights.’ She further adds, ‘we swept and scavenged for the comfort of all others, these villagers imposed free and forced labour on us.’ We moved and lived an unsettled life for three generations (she is now 56 years old moving within the familiar orbit of 50 to 60 miles of the village. In 1968, she, along with her community leaders, met Sankaran appealing for a piece of land. He readily agreed. After allotment, Rs. 100 was given to each allottee to pitch their huts’.

When we started pitching up our tents, even before the lamp was lit the hut was lit, the landlords set fire to our huts. In the fields as a mark of ownership rights, we had erected huge bamboos, they were taken away. Our people were beaten up. Some of us ran to collector’s Camp Office, in the midnight he came with the police force and protected us. By morning CRPF arrived and they were stationed for more than fifteen days. He would frequently visit us enquiring our wellbeing. What we are today is all because of him<sup>30</sup>.

This is one instance of threats, tortures and violent attacks on the allottees that Sankaran checked by using the police forces. A random sampling survey reveals that Sankaran had granted 100 Girijan families of Sreeharikota an extent of 200 families at Gandhi Jana Sangam towards the north of river Pennar. Land measuring 150 acres was allotted to 300 families presently known as Gandhi Girijana Colony, about 290 acres of land in Inamadurga village north of river Pennar and east of Kovvur was distributed to 200 families. In the villages of Sangam, Duvvuru, Jonawada, Kothilla Puddi Girijan Colony, Woodhousepet, Siddipuram, Rekala, Peddabuthallu, Buchi Reddy Palem, Dontalli, AdaviRaju Palem, Kavali, Kovur, Podalkur, Vemala Chetty Bavi, Uma Reddy Gunta, SCs and STs received cultivable lands to an extent of 150 acres, 100 acres, 75 acres, 60 acres, 35 acres, 50 acres, 65 acres, 90 acres, 80 acres, 35 acres, 65 acres, 45 acres, 25 acres. 50 acres, 60 acres respectively. Wells were dug and bores sunk. Many pipe lines were connected to the field to irrigate them. Canals were dug as a constant source of irrigation to the otherwise dry lands. For example, a canal was dug from ‘Nellore supply channel to Kothalapuddi Girijan

Colony. Similarly, from Duvvuru Kalligeri Reservoir to Woodhousepet. Kanupur canal was completed in Nellore Taluk-Mogallapalem Village, supply channel for Sangam pumping scheme was excavated in Nellore district, Kovur Taluk-Sangam and Tarunavoya Village<sup>31</sup>.

### **House Sites Allotment:**

A programme of distributing house sites and pattas (launched and completed to Government NGO's, Class IV employees, police personnel, ex-servicemen, revenue employees, medical employees including nurses, zillaparishad employees, employees of the state electricity board including electrical workers. Besides, Government employees, other privately employed persons such as printing presses, low paid employees were given five cents per head and were registered under the cooperative house site society.

House sites for 900 NGOs, at the rate of 70 cents per head, and 500 Class IV employees of the district were given house sites. A series of house sites assignments were made in favour of nearly 900 families of Scheduled Tribes under the Scheduled Tribes Housing Cooperative Society and Suburban Adivasi House site Society. A similar number of SCs were registered under the centenary year of Harijan House site Society. Nearly 125 acres were thus placed at the disposal of the adivasi and harijan families. Thus, under colony development, house sites assignments to the Press, Bank, NGOs and such schemes were taking concrete shape on ground in the suburban villages around Nellore town.

A number of colonies came up in the town and villages throughout the district, to name a few-Revenue Colony, Weavers Colony, Bankers Colony, NGO Colony, Cooperative Society Colony, Postal Colony, Harijan and Girijan Colonies etcetera. In rural Nellore, a number of Harijan and Girijan settlements were established. Gandhi Girijan Colony (Koouthlapudi Girijana Colony, Jolengapalem Girijana Colony, Sankara Veeraraghavapuram, Siddipuram Colony Uma Reddy Colony, Sankaran Colony<sup>32</sup>.

Housing was completed to hundreds and hundreds of families. In recognition of his service many villages were named after him. Sankara Veera Raghavapuram, Sankaran Colony, Sankaraiha Nagar. The establishment of these settlements by him remains memorable. The Schedule caste and Schedule tribes of these villages who were residing on

the ridges of small rivulets, having no house sites of their own, chose the Governments Canal *bunds*, tank *bunds*, public sites for their portable habitations of huts and revels towards the north of Nellore quite often were evicted either by the rich landlords or the Public Works Department. This miserable sight of the Yanadis and the SCs attracted his attention when he was on tour. No effort was spared. The village sites were measured, cleared and allotted. The officers were urged to do the needful.

He authorized the construction of houses to these families. Thus arose scores of colonies for several taluks of the district. Padmabhushan Venillakanti Raghavaiha, President of Adimajathi SevakSangh and Advocate turned tribal activist for fifty years notes;

In a record period of 18 months, for the first time in the history of the District such a massive land distribution programme was ventured. He distributed 165.35 acres of land to 2100 Harijans and 43.30 acres land for 966 tribes for the construction of houses within Nellore town itself, they acquired 690 acres for further distribution. Amount of Rs.58,28,035 was spent from Rs.62 lakhs that the Government sanctioned towards drought relief. Amount of Rs.1,35,950 was given to 1725 people as old-age pension. An extent of 4500 acres was distributed to the tribals, 15000 acres to SCs the other poor and minorities, 19000 acres for cultivation. It is remarkable and unprecedented, 'observes Raghavaiha'<sup>33</sup>.

### **Development Works Pursue:**

Sankaran's conception of development is derived from the social welfare paradigm developed into "change" through 'justice' and not just change. As a part of this exercise, a number of developmental works were undertaken. The following are a few of them:

A programme for supplying electric motor/oil engine, digging of wells and filter points for SCs and Girijans was drawn to consolidate the efforts already made in respect of land distribution. In other words, the Collector firmly shared the concern that unless the water lifting appliances are also supplied to the landless poor for whom wells have been sunk, it is unlikely that they would be able to derive the benefits of the schemes like distribution of land, sinking of wells and filter points sanctioned to them. To meet the expenses, it was

designed that the loans be given on personal security as this falls in the category of distress loans. Under the Taccavi Mannual loans up to Rs. 200. It was ensured that the loans were not given in cash but only in kind. This programme first of its kind was implemented as crash programme and the first phase which commenced on 7 July 1968 completed before the 15 of August just in a month. The second phase which began on 27 February 1969 was completed before the end of March 1969. This imaginative designing and delivering of the scheme is considered as one of the finest initiatives of administration to secure improvements in the living conditions of the poor.

Sankaran connected several villages with a network of roads, most important road that was laid during his period was 30 kms. Road, from Cherjella to Kamapathi, approach road from CNT to Gradda Gunta Village, Sullurpet, Yanadi Sangam Road, Woodhousepet road, Duvvuru-Mukthapuram and Duvvur Kamakshamma Swamy Temple to Padmati Harijan Wada are a few, connecting the hamlets of villages to the main road. These roads have changed their lives. The Nalavagu Bridge in Thourpu Kammampadu Village is popularly known as Sankaran/Sankaraiha bridge. Thurppu Kammampadu Village is situated between Podalkur and Kalawai. There was a rivulet called Nallavagu, because of which for years and years people suffered due to inundation. During the monsoon they saw the worst things. They were unable to reach the main road. In one of his visits to the villages, the villagers requested the Collector for a bridge, which was sanctioned on the spot. That same day, a review meeting was held, proceedings of the orders to implement the work of the bridge were forwarded to the BDO, PWD Engineers and Revenue Inspectors. This was narrated by the BDO of Podalkur Samithi<sup>34</sup>. The roads and bridges were not the only examples of development ushered in by a pro-poor Government agency-the Collector of the District-but officialdom (red tape stayed away).

Sankaran's developmental agenda being comprehensive included setting up of many Government schools in the remotest villages of the district helping poor children accessing the educational facilities to those few who had never gone to school. In this direction the NGOs of the district were encouraged to be a part of the transformative agenda by extending all support possible by the Collector. Enugu Pattabhirami Reddy, 'Shri Enugu Kamma Memorial Social Welfare Hostel, Nellore was started in the year 1964 with 19 boarders on its

roll; the strength of the hostel had grown to 170 in the year 1968-9<sup>35</sup>. He further states, that providing accommodation for all these poor girls in rented buildings was quite difficult due to taboos of untouchability, since all these girls were from the scheduled caste community. The hostel authorities approached S.R. Sankaran and briefed the matter. This was what the Collector needed, an extent of 10 acres land was alienated for the above hostel. In the same year a residential school also came up within 10 acres attached to the hostel. Similarly, an extent of 14.55 acres was alienated in favour of the social welfare boys hostel in Nellore town (Subderpet).

Interestingly, pending completion of formalities, the sites were ordered to be handed over to the authorities for construction of hostels. Permission for occupation of the lands was granted to the two social welfare institutions meant for SC boys and SC girls, in view of its laudable aim. This also shows that on matters of social welfare long check slips were avoided, it was driven by speed and dynamism. The encouragement of the Collector had a far reaching effect. A few social welfare hostels came up in the villages of the district; where SCs and STs were concentrated, Kota, Atmakur, Naidupet, Sullurpet and Kovur. He pursued the development of these hostels even as a Collector and Secretary social welfare. He frequently visited these hostels whenever on camps and provided necessary support and guidance and assistance as part of his concept of development. Many men and women from the SC and ST community were recruited in these hostels as wardens, peons, watchmen, attenders, cooks. He converted the Enugu Patabhi Rami Reddy Hostel into a Government hostel.

Sankaran's administration labored hard on matters of concern like human dignity, accessibility to basic amenities-food, shelter, rural electrification and drinking water. SCs and STs were provided vocational training in fields like driving and mechanics, fifteen to twenty candidates were sent to Vishakapatnam for receiving training in driving and were absorbed into the service immediately. Loans were given to educated unemployed youth to start some petty trade and business, rickshaws were provided to the Girijans to eke out a living, and some students were also sent for higher education out of his own personal income.

He got loans sanctioned through Government banks and cooperative societies for various purposes such as irrigating the land or starting of small business. As a case in point,

in Woodhousepet village alone 15 families were sanctioned loans of Rs.600 each from Sangam syndicate bank to start brick business. Further banks were urged to give loans without much hassle.

As a part of his mission, he took up the temple entry programme jonnawada Kamakshamma temple is the famous temple in Nellore district. SCs and STs were completely prevented from entering the temple. His coming saw the lifting up of the taboo and the right to enter the temple was realized in reality. Similarly in Sriharikota, Modaliars forbid the entry of SCs into temples and public places. He convened 'Harijan day' enlightened them on human dignity and against practicing untouchability.

These instances are indicative of how state institutions committed to the constitutional values can mitigate human suffering and enhance human dignity.

### **Leadership Style:**

As head of the District, he influenced all the heads of the departments. Every department was informed of the purpose. The evidence, in fact, matches Sankaran's leadership and his reputation. As head of the organization, he worked and made others work. His Joint Collector observed 'Sankaran had time for everybody, like Saint Xavier or Ignatius Loyola, but not for himself. The sensitivity and competence with which he pioneered the distribution and redistribution of land is water shed in the history of Nellore district. This is shared by no less a person than V. Raghavaiha who otherwise had unhappy experience with bureaucracy',<sup>36</sup> an adivasi activist.

The speed with which he expedited the work is remarkable. The Nalavagu bridge, the Marki drinking water scheme, and a plethora of evictions and allotments, issuing of pattas in the night, going on tour specifically for this purpose, stands as testimony to his commitment to work. The BDO of Podalkur Samithi observed 'when moving to inspect the rivulet, when his jeep engine halfway through, threw itself out and showed no chances of functioning. It was mid-summer, in the scorching heat, he walked nearly three kilometers on foot and reached the village. When he saw the situation proposed for a bridge, on the spot



returned to the block by the last bus from the village, late in the evening, held a review meeting and by 6 AM in the morning the report for executing the bridge was sent<sup>37</sup>. The Block Development Officer further adds, 'the entire Samithi officials and non-officials wondered whether if he had slept in the night'.

Similar was the way in executing the encroachment & evictions, speed and spot decision was his strategy. He was sure that any delay in implementation would give space for the vested interest, mostly illegal interventions resulting in final denial of resources for the poor. Cases of allotting pattas during midnight are plenty, to thwart the mischief of the landlords to get stay orders.

The entire district machinery has to say: 'he spared no efforts when it comes to the poor' and the procedures were later completed. Due to procedural rigmarole, the government itself was contributing to inefficiency of the Revenue Department. In many cases moving from desk to desk involves greater delay especially granting of pattas and at times files being out of sight. Thus the public looked to the Collector for protection from the depredations of the revenue bureaucracy which was fraught with negative culture, during this period he created such a conducive climate for the department that the entire revenue department was inspired with a social purpose.

Such kinds of decisions as Simon calls "non-programmed decisions which are novel, unstructured and consequential and have to be tackled independently as no-cut and dry methods, are available for handling them. Programmed decisions are repetitive routine in nature. In such cases, definite procedures are worked out and are not risky. Further programmed decisions are governed by habit, knowledge and skills and these techniques are repetitive and have been in use since centuries"<sup>38</sup>. Programme decisions revolve around procedures and rationality. In the Weberian language 'procedural rationality' implies the rigorous rules, regulations and procedures which are intensely 'techno-managerial'.

The revenue department was steeped in the rigmarole of revenue rules and attached sanctity in sticking on to such rules and procedures, particularly when it comes to the poor. In fact articulation of common interest is a rare phenomenon in Indian society. With the result,

the insiders in bureaucracy pursue particularistic goals more rigorously and tend to neglect common goals. The ineffective and defective implementation of important programmes like land reforms or anti-poverty programmes can be explained from this angle. There was no gap between his private and personal life. His entire life as a Collector was located in the public domain as observed by people. His private life fascinated as much as his public. A large number of officials and general public recalled, 'as a Collector he was simple in living which epitomized higher civilizational values. He never cared for his attire. He had only four pairs of clothes, his food habits were very simple. His belongings could be contained in a towel, they said with nostalgia, Sankaran 'surpassed Gandhian simplicity for Gandhian simplicity was expensive'<sup>39</sup>.

The District Collectors' bungalows are normally surrounded by paraphernalia and symbols of power. Every peon a personal servant at home-be it a cook, a gardener, a messenger, a caretaker of the family and their members. By contrast Sankaran's style of collector's bungalow was a guest house for the petitioners. One can see nothing more than people. Due to his frugal needs, not only had he bread to spare but also sent a few children from the SC and ST families for higher education at his cost.

As a bachelor he had neither domestic commitment nor private life as such. In other words, he was not a clubber, gambler and smoker. He was absolutely free from all the habits, which several other officers suffered from. His saintly disposition might generally not fit into the IAS. Private functions like marriages, ministerial gatherings, social gatherings and comfortable life were not his cup of tea<sup>40</sup>.

Of all the traits identified in the study-integrity, commitment, simplicity scores the highest. Every respondent identified this as an important trait. This carried a huge political weight within the structure. He was so simple in his attire and behavior that quite often the general public, if they were meeting him for the first time with his subordinate officers at the camp would mistake the Collector for someone. Once it so happened that during the inspection his BDO who was very ostentatiously dressed was mistaken for Collector and people started approaching and addressing him.

It was these traits which not only generated positive power which he used for enhancing the space for the poor, but also was able to do it with unusual effectiveness. His overall approach is so exceptional that his style cannot easily fit into the classical Weberian model (the legal-rational. It combines with the traditional and egalitarian forms rendering the type strikingly unique.

This unique style which is thrown by indigenous context and social culture counters the Simonian decision-making discourse. Simon in his conceptualization of decision-making equates administration with decision-making. Simon calls his concept of Decision-making as the core of administrative action. In any organization at all levels whether higher or lower level, the element of self-governs the 'decision'. This is true since decision-making process is basically a 'choice activity'<sup>41</sup>. Hence, decisions are all self-centered – self-centered decisions pertain to decision-makers either-personal, political or social inclinations. Simon further asserts that the top management cannot dictate to every member of the organization what each decision must be, but it can influence some, perhaps the most important ones on which the decisions are designed with the goals of organization in mind, such a purpose also percolates down the line and the vice-versa is also possible; If the decisions are self-centered, such a self-centered goal penetrate at all levels of the organization, such decisions are made at all levels.

Simon like Bernard also devotes considerable attention on the concept of authority. Authority is one of the means through which organizational man is made to conform to the organizational demands. Simon like Bernard argues that the operative employer is said to accept authority whenever he permits his behavior to be guided by the decision of the superior. Simon discusses about the "zone of acceptance" and says that if exercise of authority is attempted beyond the zone of acceptance the subordinate disobeys it<sup>42</sup>.

Unlike Simon and Bernard, Weber moves many steps down on the idea of authority and power which is harsh. Administration for Weber is synonymous with power, authority and domination<sup>43</sup>. And the conflicts, as far as organizations are concerned, are rooted in power and authority and the entire domain of ethics revolves around the conflicts. Power is the pursuit of the individual to influence the behavior of the other. This leads to hierarchical

equations, causing perpetual tensions in the interpersonal relations. In the moral-legal rational authority driven by a social purpose, power gets humanized. Once power acquires a humane face, the goals of the organization get elevated to a higher order. In such an order attitudinal conflicts either do not occur or get submerged in the long drawn processes.

The age-old SP and DM controversy in general could be related to this disposition at a particular level. The heads of the district revel in bullying and bossing over those who are below them. Relations of cooperation envisaged between the DM and SP in a district is alien to the district administrative culture. Each tries to force symbols of subordination on the other with disastrous results for district administration. The situation is caused by the personalities of officers concerned. It is one of purely individual choice and not structural. Vijaya Rama Rao, who worked as SP during Sankaran's tenure as collector says that they were partners and colleagues for a common cause. He further adds that the secret was that he had given free rein as far as routine matters were concerned. Whenever there was something important the SP would consult him. Whenever he DM had any hint of a problem he would check with the SP and when the occasion demanded would take over completely, and the SP would be on the DM's side<sup>44</sup>. The manner in which Sankaran collaborated with district Superintendent of Police at Nellore is a lesson in effective team building. During his time the police force was extensively used for land allocation and cultivation. The support of the SP was possible. Such cordial SP and DM relation gave no space for politicians to sneak in. It was also the practice that 'On many occasions during the ministerial visits the Collector would go to the SP's house which was on the main road, from there he will be picked up by the minister's vehicle, occasionally as a sign of good gesture the DM would go to the SP's house for classification of files.' The age-old trend is politicians play their cards to hold either of them in their grip. It is this moral sensibility and human concerns provide a counter balancing force to the authoritarian and counterproductive influence of power.

Sankaran's potential to respond to the rights of the marginalized is studied under objective conditions---social, economic and political. Political interference was yet another challenge to the administration, which was countered successfully. Very often, political interference is used as a defense mechanism and that DMs make more out of the issue than is warranted<sup>45</sup>.

The phenomena of interference in the administration could be dated back in history to the eighteenth century. Beams held that 'there was much interference from Secretariat, since the instructions issued from there left no discretion to the man on the spot'<sup>46</sup>. As Potters study regards the continuity of such interference in the post-Independent India too. For instance, Bakhi<sup>47</sup> who disagreed with the political leadership which he thought was using pressure to get the wrong things from the administration, wrote in his letter of resignation, 'my spirit was not in harmony with the official environment of my life.' Banerjee (ICS, UP also found in the early 1950s, that he could not abide 'the conversion of the administration into a playground for political parties' nor the apparent ease with which so many of his service colleagues fitted strongly into the administrative elite'<sup>48</sup>. Others left for similar reasons.

'From the first day of Independence the administration was rooted in politics observed Mangat Rai'<sup>49</sup>(ICS, Punjab 'for politics influenced the administration and administration learnt to be sensitive to politics.' It is interesting to note that Shah Commission found 'many Collectors' obediently carried out the instructions emanating from politicians issued on personal or political considerations, these men said to the Shah Commission that in the circumstances they had no choice – they were helpless for fear of the consequences of not obeying<sup>50</sup>. It is a fact that every Collector subjected to a steady stream of pressure from local and not so local politicians to use his or her powers to allocate scarce resources in a manner beneficial to particular interest. What is sad and disastrous is the civil servants tended to bend more when coping with political pressures and that levels of corruption had increased. Officers easily succumb to pressures since they need political favours, especially "wet posts" for which they discuss with senior ministers. Quite often civil servants kneel for the blessing of the politicians. In contrast politicians sought the blessings of the Collector (S.R. Sankaran, when Anam Sanjeev Reddy was to be sworn in as Civil Supplies Minister in Shri Brahmananda Reddy's cabinet, he went straight to Sankaran's bungalow to seek his blessings<sup>51</sup>.

Most of the Ministers in Brahmananda Reddy's cabinet were from Nellore district and the Collector had enough pressure and reason to succumb but he declined to bend even an inch against the law. Despite the signals from the CM 'to be careful in evicting the

encroached landlords when Chennu Rami Reddy's (minister for municipal administration land was evicted and allotted, the minister alleged in the Assembly that the Collector had asked him to get out.' Similar was the attitude of MLA P. Rami Reddy and a few others stand as living testimony of Sankaran's courage and conviction that no decision was taken under pressure nor to the advantage of any politician. Instead, politicians moved with him, Menakuru Gopala Krishna Reddy, President of Nellore District Congress, called for an All Member Conference on 16 April 1968, and unanimously declared that the Congress government, from its formation till date, had not undertaken such immense work for the upliftment of the people and that they appreciated the interest and hard work put in by Sankaran and his team for the welfare of the people<sup>52</sup>.

Transfers and postings (swords in the hands of the politicians to punish the un-obliging officers soon came to Sankaran too. A sudden transfer order was issued. His transfer created a sensation in Nellore district. The press workers and Yanadi Sangam released a pamphlet as a warning to the government in protest against the transfer of a people-friendly Collector. In addition to these 58 tribal unions, 18 SC unions and Andhra Pradesh Tribal Sevak Sangh President Shri V. Raghavaiha and a few other unions protested against the decision of the government. Never before or after were such protests against transfer of Collectors were witnessed in the history of Nellore district<sup>53</sup>.

### **People's Assessment:**

Thirty five years later his work has been recalled with fresh memories as if it happened the previous day. The form and substance of his work is so strong that it has been a lasting collective memory of the public, that in this lasting memory of his selfless service is remembered. The people named their colonies, houses and children after him-Sankaran Colony, Sankaran Nilayam, Sankara Veera Raghavapuram, Sankaran Nagar, (Sankara Bhawani are a few worth recounting. This may at one level sound feudal, but these modes of remembering would also be rooted in a far more positive relationship. Perhaps, it is one example where the old modes acquire a new and different meanings altogether. His intimacy with the general public was so high that they could not take his transfer without emotional entanglement. People all over the district were anguished. Most of the villagers had organized

meetings for bidding him adieu. Men and women broke down on the news of his transfer concern and emotion swept the poor”. Hundreds of people protested and fought the forces behind his transfer. A fierce battle ensued but in vain<sup>54</sup>.

Venalakanti Raghavaiah recorded in his diary that, in his 70 years of activism, he had never organized a farewell to any of the officials. He rather was frustrated over the District bureaucracy in particular. Under his leadership, an emotional farewell was organized on the shores of River Pennar. Hundreds and hundreds of *Yanadies* and SCs had gathered. Addressing the gathering, Sankaran said, ‘Collectors will come and go but be courageous and hold on to the land that is allotted to you. We would be happy to see you progress.’ Not incorrectly did the Imperial Gazetteer of India observe, ‘A Collector of strong and sympathetic character and with the gift of insight may gain the strongest hold over the affection and imagination of the peasantry, and tales of his sagacity and good deeds will be told in remote villages many years after his name had ceased to be borne on the civil list of his province’<sup>55</sup>.

## **SUMMING UP:**

The case studies cited in the Chapter relates to distribution of land to Dalits, making these lands cultivable by making electric pumps available to them, irrigating the lands wherever possible through pipeline connections improving connectivity of the village by construction of roads and bridges, setting up of schools, extension of credit and skills to the poor for self-employment and erasing stigma of untouchability and exclusion by lifting the taboo on entry of dalits to the temples and public places.

Most interesting and telling instance is the eviction of encroached lands by rich landlords and politicians imposition of ceiling on agricultural land holdings and taking over surplus land of the large landowners. This brought him in direct confrontation with the rich land lords and politicians. There were nearly 32 court cases filed against Sankaran by the encroachers, Sankaran won all the cases and the evicted lands were allotted to the poor. In a number of instances the rich landlords were harassing the occupants, in all these cases police protection was given to them. The study also strongly brings in the capacity of Sankaran to

resist the pressures-political and non-political, particularly when the adversaries happen to be powerful and well connected. He carried on with his implementation of decisions determinedly notwithstanding the odds against them. It is this behavioural pattern of this agent was against the choice of the structure that not only brought him in direct confrontation with the ruling class but enabled him to provide needed assistance to the poor. Finally the structure came down heavily on Sankaran by abrupt transfer orders. It has therefore to say that Sankaran took the constitutional mandate and its values quite seriously irrespective of the political regime and its priorities. In the case of conflict between the two, the former prevailed over the later in case of Sankaran while the dominant practice is to accept the behavioural choice of the structure, due to lack of conviction and courage.

In Nellore district Sankaran is popularly known as “poor man’s collector”. People looked at him not as a collector but as a philanthropist, friend or a close relative. Hundreds and hundreds of people met him wherever he was and the poor recognized that they were being heard. It is refreshing to listen to the poor people who recalled his services as if it happened the previous day. His pro-poor intervention has brought striking changes in the lives of the poor that he could cover.

His massive land distribution programme surpassed that of collector. Maleyappan (1947) who was widely known in Nellore District before Sankaran. Senior citizens activists and the poor recall that the way he pioneered the distribution and re-distribution of land was not only amazing but as if a land reforms revolution was happening. This and the various land related works not only empowered the poor but made them assertive and articulate.

The discretion used in favour of the poor notwithstanding the culpability of the State and the pro-poor measures of Sankaran as District Collector such as implementation of land reforms, eviction of rich landlords, allotment of surplus government land to the poor Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has catalyzed major changes in the lives of the poor that he could cover. Sankaran carried out his social justice agenda so passionately even against the ruling structures unwillingness to do so by choice. Under the objective conditions of porous and repressive structure, subjective preference (of distributive justice, agenda for an egalitarian order of agents response is seen.



Most of the ministers in Bhramnandha Reddys cabinet were from Nellore District and the collector had enough pressure and reason to succumb but he declined to bend even an inch against the spirit of law. Notwithstanding the “alerts” from the CM to slow pedal in evicting the encroached lands of the landlords. A number of ministers encroached lands were evicted, Chennchu Rami Reddy (Minister for Municipal Administration P. Rami Reddy, MLA and a few other prominent land lords of the district who were directly or indirectly supporters of their political masters. This formed the primary reason for his abrupt transfer from the District, much earlier than the stipulated duration for a collector in a particular district.

What stands unique in his administration is the discretion that the authority vests in the position is wielded in favour of the poor. In the case of several administrators this is the other way round. The power used in favour of the privileged and powerful appears to be natural, as it does not challenge the given order. By the same logic, any decision in favour of the poor is interpreted as partisan, biased and subjective. This is the reason why the civil servant in the latter case has to make a conscious moral choice and prescribe standards to himself / herself so that his behaviour is consistent with the legal standards and at the same time does not blatantly violate them.

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## **Chapter - 3**

### **Secretary Social Welfare First and Second Tenure**

The previous chapter on the role of District Collector analysed how Sankaran in an autonomous position as collector exercised his discretion in favour of the poor-the Schedule caste and the Schedule tribes, by safeguarding their rights and enhancing human dignity and mitigating human suffering. As young Collector he addressed issues of **Untouchability**, equal rights, poverty alleviation and acted firmly and affirmatively.

His concentration on distribution of lands and house sites to the SCs and STs and BCs, eviction of rich landowners from their encroachments on Government lands Government – owned cultivable waste lands available to SCs and STs and other poor for house sites and cultivation made the landed gentry and persons occupying powerful political and higher administrative positions uncomfortable with. The repressive nature of the state is much more in evidence, when Chennchu Rami Reddys'(Minister for Municipal Administration and MLA P.Rami.Reddy's lands were evicted and allotted to the poor. The then Chief Minister Brahmanadh Reddy cautioned Sankaran to "slow pedal" the case of eviction Sankaran did not heed to the "unlawful" direction of the then Chief Minister. He was transferred in a less than stipulated duration

Before his tenure in Social Welfare, **Sankaran** was in the early 1970's, special assistance to **Shri. Mohan Kumara Mangalam** Union Minister for Steel and Mines. He was instrumental in the Nationalization of the coal mines with the due interest of the nation at large and the labours in particular.

As a sensitive administrator Sankaran sensed the deteriorating conditions of the labourer in the "Coal Mines" under the private management serious irregularities were committed in the management of the labourers. As the private owners were notoriously anti-laborers and all the efforts to regulate wages and working conditions of the coal mines workers had failed. This gave rise to continuous friction between laborers and the Management in the coal industry. Unfair labor practices including under employment of

workers and large scale exploitation of labour, unwillingness to act upon the labor laws and violation of mine safety laws were rampant.

Further there was no evidence of any sustained efforts on the part of the private collieries to improve their working conditions in the mines and a dangerous situation was developing in which labour was becoming more and more restive and the Government not being able to prevent the deteriorating situation. The conditions and the consequence of coal mine, under the private sector, Sankaran felt will not improve the situation. He thought that an integrated development of coal reserves with regard to long term public interest was possible only under the public sector. He further felt that public Management alone could ensure rational and systematic development of the coal reserves in the country wherein consideration of profit making subordinated to rational mining methods and national objectives.<sup>1</sup> His pioneering work with regard to coal mines has significantly improved safety measures in the mines, this adequately reflected in his approach to development and change. The idealist continuously reminded the ideologue about the promise and need to nationalize the coal industry and it was because of the combination of **Shri. Mohan Kumara Mangalam** and Sankaran that this measure of significance went through with the support of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.<sup>2</sup> SathyaBhama and Subramaniam<sup>3</sup> recalled with nostalgia, how Sankaran as special assistant to **Mohan Kumara Mangalam** burnt his midnight lamp drafting and re-drafting the notings to impress upon the Minister the justification for Nationalisation of coal mines as the working conditions of coal workers under the private sector were “deteriorating” and deplorable.” Several nights were spent in comprehending drafting the notings and spared no efforts till it received ratification of the Parliament.

Several other IAS Officers recalled the efforts of Sankaran with fresh memories and his fast track approach for the nationalization of coal mines. His brilliant “reasoning” out for nationalization of coal mines, magnitude of working conditions of the labourers and so densely internalizing the “cause” identifying himself, with the suffering of these workers, impressed **Mohan Kumara Mangalam** to the core. He continued to work in the same pace whatever was the position he occupied. This spirit is more evident and rigorous when he became Secretary social welfare.

His salient work as Secretary Social Welfare to Government of **Andhra Pradesh** primarily includes - land reforms, establishment of Social Welfare Schools, Residential Schools, Land ceiling, eviction of encroached lands, distribution of lands for cultivation and housing, issues of equality – non discrimination, justices and affirmative action in favour of socially and economically backward sections. In an effort to understand and respond better to these issues and set norms for governance for the poor he “discovered” unjust practice of “bonded labour” in the state and his concern for the welfare of the constituency of the Bonded Labor – who constitute the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes that reinforced his steadfast opposition to injustice. His firmness to dissent and disobey the unlawful direction of a predatory state, whose commitment to the cause of the poor being rhetoric and Sankaran asserting to hold to the social justice mandate of the constitution is cross checked empirically. It also attempts to trace the unique attributes of this personality which made him push the boundaries of fairness and justices within the system.

#### **SERVICES FOR DALITS AND OTHER DEPRIVED CLASSES.**

Sankaran’s concern for empowering SC and ST’S led to starting of number of hostels for school and college students. He personally reviewed the work and insisted the collectors to pursue and expedite the implementation. On his field trips he interacted with students, saw the living condition in the hostels and devised policies for constant improvement. He paid personal attention in securing the sanction and the utilization of pre metric and post metric Scholarships. He personally designed the format so as to enable the Sc’s & ST learners to carry forward the scholarships from Pre – metric to Post-metric automatically which was not the practice earlier. The procedure earlier had caused severe hardships to the students as the scholarship would stop at the pre-metric level and has to be pursued for post metric afresh causing financial hardships to the learners.<sup>5</sup> He used to ensure clearance of finance department for increasing number of hostels, increasing the diet charges and increasing the number of pre-metric scholarships .“ Since the post-metric scholarships were funded by Government of India, his effort on this item was of timely release of funds by finance Department and disbursal to students by the colleges and Universities was of great help.”<sup>6</sup> A large number of SC, ST& BC students benefited from these hostels and have become Doctors, Engineers (I.I.T, Social Scientists, teachers and

lecturers, a few others were pursuing higher education and taking on the challenges of the society.

A number of Residential schools came up in the state of Andhra Pradesh, recalling the works of Sankaran in this area Shasthry<sup>7</sup> and Reymond Peter<sup>8</sup> (social welfare secretary 2009 stated that the idea of Residential schools and colleges emanated from Sankarans' vision so did feel many of the respondents whom the researcher had interviewed. This includes Residential school teachers, beneficiaries, mandal Officers. The teachers of Nallavagu Social welfare Residential School stated that, their school is situated in the vicinity of a highly concentrated rural poor particularly SC & ST's and it is benefiting the children of bonded laborers and Jogins. A large number of students came from Khanti, the backward areas. The school has classes from VIth standard to XII standard having a strength of 600 students.<sup>9</sup>

A number of Dalit students from AP residential school could succeed in UPSC exam and secure IAS, IPS, and other central service position., said Nagaraju (IAS Tripura cadre alumni of AP Residential School.<sup>10</sup> It is estimated that close to 40% of the SC's and ST's & BC in the state and central services from A.P are from these Residential schools and colleges. At his instance study circles were started to coach SC's, ST's and BC's students to appear for UPSC and APPSC examinations. To begin with he persuaded the then Vice-Chancellor of Osmania University to earmark boarding and lodging for a select few students of SC and ST communities aspiring for "competitive exam". The Vice-Chancellor readily agreed and the needful was done. He regularly visited the study circle after his duty hours and enquired their well being and encouraged them to vigorously pursue their studies. He coached regularly ( between 8:30 PM to 9.30 PM courses in economics recalled Rama Rao (IPS Tripura Cadre<sup>11</sup> who cleared his UPSC from this study circle. Similarly study circles were setup in Andhra University too, the scheme was later extended to Vijayawada and Tirupathi. Incidentally a large number of them (who were selected from these study circles became the respondents in the above area of inquiry<sup>12</sup>



### **Land reforms, land ceiling, assigning land to the landless.**

His major concern or area of priority was distribution of land to the landless poor SC,ST & BC by imposition of ceiling on agricultural land holdings, taking over surplus land of the large land owners, eviction of rich landowners from their encroachments on Government lands in making such lands available to SC's and other poor for house sites, housing and cultivation. Reviewing the programmes of assigned Government lands making them cultivable and providing irrigation facilities, was one of important items of his field visits. This was done with incredible regularity, not only did he compel Governments to set aside significant proportion of the state budgets for welfare of the SC's and ST's<sup>13</sup>, a network of Social Welfare programmes were designed and delivered "for Justice and welfare of socially economically deprived communities. It was due to his initiative that Andhra Pradesh has a network of Social Welfare programmes, probably no other state in terms of welfare measures for Scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes could be compared to Andhra Pradesh. The entire Social Welfare department guidelines were designed and developed by him. But for him such activities in the state were almost inconceivable. The most singular act of Sankaran which the SC & ST community is never tired of recalling with gratitude was his issuing of 120 Government orders to effect the resolutions passed in a week long Harijan conference held from 10<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> April 1976. Although the credit for holding such a unique conference which is historic in Andhra Pradesh - perhaps the first ever in the country goes to the minister for Harijan Welfare Sri Batham Sriramanamurthy. Soon after this conference, Sankarn returned to Hyderabad and took over as secretary Social Welfare, these identified ready for action items were quickly converted into formal GO's & Practical programmes and actions by him. The various measures listed out for protection and development of SC's under the heads of untouchability Act and amendments required and its implementation. Social disabilities and atrocities on SCs & STs expansion of reservation; land reforms, assignment and distribution of land ; integrated development of SCs lands, non- agriculture economic programmes, institutional finance; minimum wages for agricultural labour, removal of indebtedness, housing, SC Women's issues, issues of SC converts to other religions.etc. The "120 " GO is popularly known in the state of Andhra Pradesh as a compendium to the Secretaries of Social Welfare in the State of AP. The entire social welfare policies of this state are drawn from this comprehensive guidelines.... This also represented a landmark in pronouncing certain directions for guiding the future course of

action. This stepped up initiatives of the government to move further in the light of these GOs recommendations and resolution in the subsequent years and ensure in improving the living conditions of vast majority of Harijans in the country<sup>16</sup>.

## **IDENTIFICATION RELEASE AND REHABILITATION OF BONDED LABOURS:**

### **A case study of Medak District in Andhra Pradesh.**

In Andhra Pradesh there was wide spread incidence of Bonded labour open and disguised among the rural workers particularly from the Scheduled Castes. As a sensitive civil servant he noticed that the phenomenon of BL arose from the basic economic hardships which the agricultural workers suffered from and the social disabilities imposed on them by an uneven society characterized by feudal and semi- feudal conditions. Sankaaran had brought in well co-ordinated and sustained efforts to retrieve the agricultural workers particularly the BL from the inhuman conditions of existence. Since the enactment of the Act 1976, he took special measures to identify and free the B.L. through sustainable relief and rehabilitation to the released labours. The relief given was substantial and sustaining till this day. This is crucial and critical to the release and rehabilitations of BL as this ensured that they no longer depended on the landlords and prevented them from reverting to the conditions of bondage. In reality his goal was to provide regular source of income by self sustaining and continuous activity.

Bonded labour Abolition Act bill was passed by both the house of the parliament on 4<sup>th</sup> Feb 1976 and received the assent of the President thereafter. But in terms of its application it was given retrospective effect (i.e. With Effect from 25/10/1975). The Act through vigilance committees at the district and sub-divisional levels provides for an institutional mechanism for identification of bonded labours, but does not provide the method for determining the bondage. It was Sankaran who developed the method for identification of BL system a method as simple, intelligible and down to earth. Identification of BL is not as straight and simple as identifying voters with indelible ink as in the electoral process or plain counting of heads as in a decimal census operation.<sup>16</sup>

Identification of victims of BL systems in its true sense and essence is discovery of a non being an exile of civilization and his/ her transformation into a full being through a process of access to a decent and dignified livelihood, decent wage which is both need based and living wage and psychological assurance and re-assurance. On identifying the BL relief and rehabilitation formed the foremost step which gave assurance to the victim.

### **Method of determining bondage:**

After reaching the village the investigating officer or team of officers entrusted with the work of identification of BL' should proceed to the Harijan wada (SC Basti and not to the so-called main village, as most of the agricultural labourers in the village are members of SC,ST, & OBC's. May be assembled in the SC basti, for the sake of convenience and for facility of having better interactions they may be divided into two groups such as:

#### ***Raju Cooli or daily labour.***

The following questions were put to them in a simple, friendly and interpersonal manner

- Do you actually go to work with anyone who calls you for work?
- Where and with whom did you work in the last week or ten days?
- What is the rate of wage for man/women fixed and actually paid?

The answer will normally be that they go to work with whoever calls them. In this course of a week or ten days, they would have worked with 2,3, or more number of persons or places. The rates of wages would of course be low and blatantly different for men and women. The rates will be daily rates (not monthly or annual normally around Rs. 2-50 to Rs. 3.00 for men and Rs.1.50 to 2.00 for women. These rates may vary from place to place and from busy season to lean season.

### ***Jeetham:-***

Those persons who are not Roju Coolie are prima Facie “ Jeetham” or Victims of BLS. The term “Jeetham” in Telangana district invariably connotes B.L. In areas adjoining of Rayalseema the term grasam is also used. The following questions were to be put to the Jeetham group.

#### **I Whom are you working with & how long have you been working?**

If he has been working for more than one year with the same landlord it is to be presumed that he has been for some reason or the other, bonded with the same person.

#### **II What is the amount of loan you had taken? When did you take the loan and for what purpose?**

The usual response in Telangana area will be that he had borrowed about Rs.400 or Rs.500 for the marriage (Lagnam of his son which took place a few years ago and for the sake of repaying the loan, the particular person has been doing “Jeetham” or the son has been put into “Jeetham”.

#### **III What is the rate of Interest on the loan?**

In most places, there is conventionally no interest for the first Rs.100/- of any loan. The remaining loan amount carries interest at the rate of about 2.5 percent per month. After the minimum formal rate effective interest rates would be much higher.

#### **IV What is your monthly wage and what are the pre-requisites?**

The wage for a person doing Jeetham is monthly or annual wage and not daily wage.

Monthly Wage ( Known as Nela Jeetham if paid in cash, this varies from Rs.5-Rs10 ( or even Lower for young children who graze the cattle of the landlord to anything up to Rs.40/kgs or so for adults. This is payable monthly, alternatively, in terms of grain, it would be 10kgs of grain per children, 20kgs young ones and about 40 kgs for adults very often this is in terms of paddy or rice or jowar or bajara . The measures referred to will be thumedu or seer which should not be taken as equivalent of standard measures. It will be much less, as crude measuring containers are used. The point to be noted is that

this amount of monthly wage is never actually paid and in fact is adjusted straight away towards the loan. As a result the labourer will not get anything in cash at all but would be forced to take a fresh advance.

## 2. **Pettubandi or Bicham**

In addition to the monthly wage the labourer is given Pettubadi (can be freely translated as capital or Bicham (this can be translated as grant-in-aid. This is either an annual payment or six monthly or periodical payment. This may vary from Rs.40/- to Rs.100/- in cash or may be expressed in terms of commodity, especially paddy or Jawar.

### **I Food:-**

The practice regarding provision of food to the BL varies, for instance in districts such as Hyderabad (Chevella Taluk the BL are not given any food at all. In districts such as Medak, one roti is given and the size of this is clearly laid down.

### **II Other items:**

It is conventional to give the BL one Gongali (woolen blanket made up of sheep hair - a pair of chappals, some tobacco and some clothes for festivals. In certain places, instead of blankets, some cash grant as low as Rs.1 is given.

### **III Petty advance (Nagadu** - The bonded labourer also take advance from the landlord for various needs and necessities. This is known as nagadu and is added to the loan. There is no obligation on the part of the landlord to give this help, but as a general gesture, the landlord does give advances from time to time and adds them to the loan.

### **IV Penalty for absence (Narga:** If on any day the bonded labourer is absent for a valid reasons or otherwise, there is no leave, the labourer has to pay a penalty (naga. The penalty is normally double the normal wage. In other words, if he is absent for one day, he has to work for two days to make up his absence.

### **V** You have worked for five years with the Landlord (which most of them would have done has the loan amount been reduced to some extent or whether at least the interest has been paid up? The answer to this will be that the loan has not been cleared at all and on the other hand the amount of loan has gone up, being non-literate and non-

numerate most of them would not know the full details of the loan, they would say that the papers are always with the landlord only. If they are further questioned as to how have they come to know that the loan has gone up or is coming down, the answer often will be that they have been told so or they have checked up with the school master. (Pantlagaru

- VI** How long will you have to work with the same landlord? Can you not go out and work with someone else?

The answer will be very clear that they have to work with the same landlord, until the loan is repaid.

- VII** When do you think that the loan will get repaid?

They cannot easily answer this because they cannot visualize anything clearly nor can they do mental accounting. After some prodding they would come with the answer that the loan can never be repaid by them or a rhetorical answer, “When will it be repaid”<sup>17</sup> this will complete the picture.

They have to work with the landlord until the loan is repaid and the loan can never be repaid. The loan is not deemed to be repaid even if the bonded labourer dies, it will be passed on to his heirs. Thus generation after generation they continue to be in debt bondage. Such families were identified by asking questions as to where the father was working, where the son is working, what the debt the father had and son continues to have is having.

It was Sankaran’s “Style” of administration reaching” the “unreached” that persisted throughout, through his regular visits to these villages and habitations of the SC & ST’s that led to “Discovery” of one of the most inhuman practice (bonded labour in Bhudmatpally village of Andole Taluk in Medak district when he and his term visited the village in 1976 to enquire about the assigned land. This practice was identified.<sup>18</sup>

This methodology is therefore the outcome of such urge for releasing the BL -All his junior colleagues especially district collectors were trained and instructed in identifying and handling of the bonded labourer. The success of release and rehabilitation bonded labourer in Andhra Pradesh is viewed as a redeeming features in the “Methodology” which was later adopted at the National level in the 1980’s<sup>19</sup> the methodology continues to be relevant even to this day as it was five decades ago.

Because of its dialogical approach it facilitated the victims to speak, think and analyse who are otherwise dumb, mute and expressionless and have had no opportunity to open up<sup>20</sup> This was the starting point of social mobilization and organization and building up of a countervailing social and economic power.

Significantly this approach has laid bare the fallacies and infirmities of the system of money lending in India and quixotic arithmetic of debt and the debtor, along with the act of chicanery and trickery, forgery and fraud being practiced with such perfection by the landlord –cum- money lenders that everything would appear to be just and fair on paper and on the surface. Further it established the hollowness of the system of patron client relationship.<sup>21</sup>

#### RELEASE AND REHABILITATION OF BONDED LABOURS; A CASE STUDY OF EIGHT VILLAGES IN MEDAK DISTRICT

Medak tops the list in the dimension and magnitude of the problem of Bonded labour, hence a survey was conducted in Medak district to gather primary source of information regarding steps Sankaran initiated in implementation of this Act, particularly release and rehabilitation programme of freed bonded labours and victims of atrocities and harassment identified and interviewed.

The number of freed bonded labourers identified for the study, their names, number of years they worked with the landlords and the kind of relief and rehabilitation they received is quite significant ( see Appendix

- I Budmatpally: Budmatpally was the first village where eleven bonded labourers were identified and released.
- II Korepole: in Korepole 18BL were indentified and released. Two bonded labours had attended the bonded labour rehabilitation camps at Chingarapuram in July 1977, they were able to spread the message of abolition of bonded labour, debt relief and minimum wages in the villages.

- III. Chowtakur: In this village 24 bonded labours were identified and released. The message of bonded labour abolition was spread through the bonded labour camps held at chinaganapuram, creating awareness among the agricultural labourers. People who attended the camp carried the message of the abolition of bonded labour, minimum wage and debt relief in the village.
- IV. Pothulaguda: In pothulaguda eight villagers were identified, released and rehabilitated.
- V. Alladurga: Next to Reddy Kanpur, Alladurga received due attention due to Deshmukhs' atrocities on Dalits, about 11-12 bonded labours were identified released and rehabilitated.
- VI. PulkurthiS: In 1971Pulkurthi had 9 to 10, bonded labourers, identified released and rehabilitated.
- VII. Reddy Kanpur: In Reddy Kanpur 12 bonded labours were identified released and rehabilitated.<sup>22</sup>

***Relief Measures:-***

On identifying the bonded labour through all inclusive creative methodology of releasing them is one thing but rehabilitating them was a bigger challenge. As a sensitive Civil Servant he noticed that the phenomenon of bonded labour arose from the basic economic hardships which the agricultural workers suffered and the social disabilities imposed on them by an uneven society characterized by feudal and semi feudal conditions. Hence he had brought in well-co-ordinate and sustained efforts to relieve the agricultural workers particularly the bonded labours from the inhuman conditions of existence. Since the enactment of the Act 1976, Sankaran took special interest /measures to identify and free the bonded labours through sustainable relief and rehabilitation. The relief given was substantial and is sustaining till this day. This is crucial and central to the release and rehabilitation of bonded labours as it ensures that they no longer depend on the landlords and prevented them from reverting to the conditions of bondage. The first assurance and re-assurance to the first identified bonded Labour in Budamatpaly village came from this pro-poor officer's



packet followed by his team numbers. Sankaran gave Rs.300/- to the bonded labour on his own and his junior colleagues Rs.200 to Rs.100 respectively .....This had a primary assurance and confidence to the Bounded Labour that sustained assistance would follow from the Government.

Further in reality his goal was to provide regular source of income by continuous self-sustaining activity.

Relief and rehabilitation programmers were combined with various schemes including education health, medical facilities and special efforts for non- formal education and functional literacy. This he felt was essential as it was the lack of minimum literacy that led the agricultural labour to affix their thumb impression on various documents binding them to forced labour. Liberal consumption loans formed a part of the rehabilitation programme. It is mainly due to external needs like food, shelter, clothing and more so for social and traditional responsibilities such as marriages and funeral that the labourers get themselves bonded for a petty amount and suffer the whole life. Strict enforcement of minimum wages formed a part of the release and rehabilitation program as it was thought that it would help in reducing the poverty and enable the labourer to be more productive. Emphasis was laid on consumption finance to prevent a fresh influx of the bonded labours and also to make possible for the freed bonded labourers to survive as free people. Therefore the scheme of rehabilitation contained a specific component of consumption finance. A summary of the relief and rehabilitation programme and the approach to improve the living standards of the freed bonded labour included

- *Provision of land to the landless agricultural labour and necessary resources and inputs for development of land into viable economic unit.*
- *Provision of complementary inputs of social consumption and ensuring proper institutional support.*
- *Consumption finance for conventional and compulsory need.*
- *Public works programme to generate employment.*
- *Establishment of schools and hostels*

Enquiries were carried out village after village in a like manner Sankaran talking to a group of people and his team ascertaining the Bonded laborer and releasing them on the spot went on and on. We rarely returned from a village in Telangana districts without netting a Jeep load of helpless bonded labors. Our hands were full with rehabilitation of the released bonded labors recalled Madhav Rao<sup>23</sup>.

To expedite the work of release and rehabilitation and that the team could not cover simultaneously all the villages. A school teacher Bommaiah from Andde Taluk was taken on deputation and given a jeep attached with a Deputy Thasildhar. He visited villages and unearthed hundreds and hundreds of bonded labourers in Medak district. The bonded labourer numbers were several hundreds<sup>24</sup>. As the message of release and rehabilitation of bonded labour spread like wild fire and that the IAS officers are prosecuting the landlords many more bonded labourers were released by landlords voluntarily<sup>25</sup> even before we could reach, recalled Madhava Rao with refreshing memories. The rehabilitation followed in all cases. Almost all the released bonded labours were SC's, the total number of bonded labours released were 10,823 of which 10,116 were rehabilitated<sup>26</sup>. The nature of release and rehabilitation was almost similar in most of the villages. On identification of the bonded labour consumption loans and provision of food grains formed immediate relief measures before rehabilitating" Rehabilitation included agricultural land, community wells, plough bullocks and carts, milch animals and protection of Civil rights.

The released bonded labourers from Budmatpally, Chowtakur, Korepole and Alladurga who attended the rehabilitation camp at Chinnaganapuram stated that Sankaran not only released and rehabilitated but created awareness which enhanced our capacity to fight for our rights". They added today we are living with self-respect and human dignity for which we owe our deep gratitude to S.R. "Most of the emancipated bonded labour are working as drivers, peons, attenders and businessmen, amazing of all is the emancipated bonded labour from Choutakurr became the sarpanch<sup>27</sup>

**Assertion And Atrocities:-** A fairly large number of them who attended the camp at Chinnaganapuram became conscious, assertive and articulate their interest and formed pressure groups" Ashaia ( a released bonded labour of Reddy Kanpur, who protested "Jeetham" became a victim of harassment and atrocities at the hands of landlords}. Ashaiha States " Landlords Damodhar Reddy, Shivasami Rddy and Sanjeeva Reddy had brutally beaten me up and set fire to my hut. Me and my family ran for life. As soon as this news

reached Sankaran he rushed to the spot, looking at our ashed hut, housing was provided. His response was highly humane and spontaneous in this issue”<sup>28</sup>

A large number of people from Reddy Kanpur stated that coming of **Sankaran** saw the lift of taboo on schedule castes in hotels, tea stalls. He had strictly warned and told that it was a serious offence punishable under law and preached the value of equality.

If Reddy Kanpur stood for atrocities Pulkurthi stood for the victimization and harassment of bonded labourers by landlord Khanshab, Bhoomaiha, Pantaiha and Poshaina stated “they were brutally beaten up and harassed for being late to the fields”. “When this was reported to Sankaran, he arrived on the spot and got khanshab arrested, indeed! many such landlords were persecuted legally. His response was so effective that thereafter the landlords feared and hesitated to harass or torture us” villages like Anapur and Alladurga had similar cases where Sankaran’s response was spontaneous.

#### **Fighting for the Poor Vs fighting against the poor – Civil Servant Vs Minister / Agent vs structure.**

Sankaran’s concentration on distribution of lands and house sites to the SC’s & ST’s and BC’s eviction of rich land owners from their encroachments on Government lands and making such lands available to the SC’s and other poor for house sites and cultivation, his firm action against “untouchability” and his practice of camping in the SC Bastis to solve problems on the spot and to build up morale of the SC’s had naturally invited the ire of the landed gentry and certain powerful persons occupying political and higher administrative positions. In other words his strenuous efforts to keep the conscience of the constitution from which one derived the mandate and that he availed of every opportunity to put in practice the fundamental constitutional principles of equality, non-discrimination, justice and affirmative action in favor of the socially and economically backward sections. As secretary social welfare (1975-77) he took up the issue of bonded labour seriously. Though abolition of bonded labour was part of the 20 point programme of Mrs Indira Gandhi. The sensitivity and competence with which he pioneered the abolition of bonded labour is watershed in the history of Andhra Pradesh. The release and rehabilitation of bonded labour in Andhra Pradesh took a “**liberation movement**” a cross section of the people volunteered to be a part of this movement which was the first of its kind in the state of Andhra Pradesh and the nation at large. The diverse multitude which surged into his battalion include NGO’s, PUCL members, School teachers, activists, Voluntary organizations, himself playing the role of an

activist. Several awareness camps were held in different villages which enhanced the overall awareness; collectivizing their concerns and acquiring courage to articulate and assert so as to be in a position to exert pressure on the administration to deliver what is their due. The poor who were hard to reach, unorganized, inarticulate, often invisible mostly the bonded labours came out in a fray against the state aggregating their interest. “ Everywhere there were gatherings and awareness camps” that bonded labours is an offence punishable under the law “Jeetham Bhand” stop bonded labour” – slogans were carried out by the victims of bonded labour (released & rehabilitated in every nook and corner of the village. In all 10,823 bonded labours were released 10,116 were rehabilitated, within a short span of time. The team inspired by Sankaran, agencies of the state and outsiders surged as “pressure groups” speaking for the interest of these invisible poor.

It reminds Jeremy Bentham’s influential idea of a “Civil Servant” as a benevolent social guardian committed to achieving the common good applies to Sankaran very aptly. In Benthamite perspective it is assumed that Civil Servants selflessly seek welfare of the people even when the people themselves do not know what is in their best interest. In an empirically well recorded information from across the state from a cross section of people and bonded labours themselves, It is revealed that the bonded labours themselves did not know what was best in their interest. The Civil Servant selflessly was seeking the welfare of these people particularly the bonded labour. when Sankaran first met an ill clad and half fed poor man and realized that he was a bonded labour. He convinced him that he should be released and Government provision for rehabilitating them by retrieving them from debt bondage. The bonded labour who were so used to a world of domination and servitude were not even aware of their rights and did not have any staying power in the competitive labour market. They even preferred reversion to thralldom”. Most of the bonded labour did not concede that they were bonded labourers for fear of reprisal from the landlord and the fear of sustenance.

Each bonded labour was cajoled in one to one talk lasting over 30 minutes or more and rescued from the landlord putting them into a Government Jeep and later ceasing the “documents” from the landlord <sup>31</sup> and systematically getting them rehabilitated. The bonded labour who had not crossed the threshold of the landlord for 10 years, 15 years and 20 years was now assertive enough to see Sankaran at the secretariat as and when needed along

with his other colleagues from the villages. This selfless benevolent act of the social guardian brought him into direct conflict with the structure yet he stood his ground firm.

In Andhra Pradesh Sankaran's work became a legend. Attempts by the state power at whatever level it would be could not stall or sabotage his "activities" (releasing and rehabilitating). Although abolition of bonded labour was a part of the 20 point programme of Indira Gandhi, the ordinance was put in practice in 1976; some of those in power were averse to taking it seriously. This was because they were either directly masters to bonded labours or were beholden for political support to bonded labour masters. This brought Sankaran into direct clash with the successive Chief Ministers but he bravely stood his ground and did not hesitate to face the consequences.<sup>32</sup> This is explained better in three important and interesting encounters this pro-poor agent had with the structure. (Chief minister of the state

### **1<sup>st</sup> Encounter:**

In 1976 a state wide collectors conference was held under the stewardship of the Chief Minister and other Ministers. Sankaran on behalf of the social welfare department (As secretary Social Welfare along with his team presented the welfare works carried out, designed and further strategies to be evolved for delivery of social justice goals. Significant of them was land reforms, distribution and re-distribution of ceiling lands and temple lands. In doing so he expressed that the allottee of the land was facing persecution, intimidation and violence from adversaries (landlord as a result there was 'attrition and hence could not reap the fruits of the allotment. He requested the Home minister's co-operation to provide them security through police machinery. The Home Minister raged in fury, thundered, it is none of my business as the issue of distribution and redistribution of land falls under the social Welfare and Revenue department. Sankaran took the mike from the home minister and politely explained to him what he meant by police protection – although the land reforms portfolio comes under the social welfare and Revenue Department, he meant the support of the Government by way of police protection/ security to enable the allottee of land and house sites to cultivate and reside there. This was objected by both, the Home Minister and the Chief Minister. The Chief Minister snubbing Sankaran rudely asked him to go back to his seat even before Sankaran could complete his point of view. This completes first encounter.

## **II<sup>nd</sup> Encounter:**

Andhra Pradesh state secretaries meet. In the same year, 1976 a little later Andhra Pradesh state secretaries conference was held in which Department heads and secretaries had to present their works. As secretary social welfare – he presented regular works on establishment of social welfare hostels for SC, ST, boys and girls and their elementary right to house sites, land, protection from “untouchability” “abolition of Jogin system and the SC, ST’s timely release of the budget and funds for meeting the agendas of the SC & ST’s. The dismal state of existence of bonded labour was explained in the meeting and action plan to be more effective particularly at the level of release and rehabilitation, so that they do not revert to “bondedness”. This deep concern when expressed with agony, the Chief Minister of the State supposed to be the guardian of the state snubbed the issue, although this was the agenda of Mrs. Gandhi in her 20 point programme. Chenna Reddy could scarce take it in, the release and rehabilitation of bonded labours from his own kith and kin. Notwithstanding the severity of the unwillingness to meet the agenda of release and rehabilitation by the political master Sankaran reached its zenith in action plan. Inspired by his social justice agendas, courage of conviction, a large number of them became his co-travellers. A revolution of sort from inside and outside the state machinery in the state against bonded labour spearheaded by Sankaran was seen. Furious as he was; the chief minister of Andhra Pradesh announced in a cabinet meeting that Sankaran was a trouble maker who went from village to village held meetings with poorest people seated on the ground under trees instigated them by declaring that they had the right to be free, and mobilized them to rebel against a lifetime of bondage.

## **3<sup>rd</sup> Encounter:**

This snubbing and branding as a revolutionary did not stop him from fulfilling the mandate of the constitution and the abolition of bonded labour. Day after Day there escalation in the release and rehabilitation was seen. In districts like Sanga Reddy and Ranga Reddy the (Reddy brethrens habitations a massive rehabilitation was done, several complaints reached Chenna Reddys office that the crops were ready for harvest and that there were no labourers. The complaints included that Sankaran from the state office has released all the BL.

They are now free and that the crops are withering before harvest and that the village economy is suffering. Chenna Reddy called for an emergency meeting with Sankaran, present were Chief Secretary, Personal secretary (IAS Principal secretary and a few cabinet members. Chenna Reddy thundered on the opening lines of the methodology Sankaran developed for the release of BL. That all investigating officers were directed to straight away visit the dalit wadas and not the so called upper castes “Chenna Reddy thundered who permitted to draft it so,” Sankaran politely replied “ I am secretary to Government of Andhra Pradesh and working within the jurisdiction of Law, further as the custodian of the poor”.

“ I had asked you to stop releasing the BL! where are the BL?” Chenna Reddy claimed that the relationship between the servant and landlord is not BL. SR protested against this stand and showed Chenna Reddy a original document of Agreement between the BL and the landlord (a specimen copy which he had ceased from the landlord(s for office record. He produced it before Chenna Reddy. Chenna Reddy declined to accept this as a bond executed between the BL and landlord and that this was created by Sankaran himself and was spreading revolution. Are you a Naxalite ..... in IAS Clothing ? Soft spoken SR retorted, “if implementing the abolition of BL is Naxalism I stand by it”. He stood his ground firmly and bravely and this enraged the Chief Minister “ He further asserted in the cabinet meeting that such subversives have no place in his government” Sankaran replied in his customary low voice yet firmly that he too did not want to work in his government and proceeded on long leave submitting his leave note to chief secretary.

### **Dissent as a virtue and the duty of disobedience.**

It is most common practice that the duty of ‘Civil servants’ was to obey without questioning the duties: which were for most time to unlawful orders of “political masters” and senior administrators unstated political or administrative directives which often advocated biased action against vulnerable and oppressed caste. For example the official position of government is that legislated land reforms ,laws for abolition of BL should be faithfully implemented. But the unstated orders of political superiors are almost invariably in favour of the powerful land owners and their land holdings.<sup>34</sup>. Implicit was the understanding that bonded labours should not be released. This is where Sankaran dissented and disobeyed the powerful Chief minister of the state when he asked him to stop releasing

the bonded labourer and not to implement land reforms and other progressive legislations, to protect the oppressed and disposed minorities, caste and women and respect human rights; in doing the above in letter and spirit, these stated lawful policies, he frequently disobeyed the unlawful demands of members of the superior executive. Far from being obedient to the unlawful directives he resisted and disobeyed these orders. In doing so he safeguarded democracy and fulfilled the aspirations of the poor and the needy wherever possible. Contrary to the above, the spectacular obedience to unlawful directives of the political masters than to the stated objectives of the law or constitution. This happened more during emergency that was imposed on the country in 1975. A judicial commission led by justice shah which later investigated these traumatic and shameful 18 months of suspended freedom, famously observed that when the “civil servants were asked to bend they crawled”.<sup>35</sup> A mass betrayal by the civil servants to the stated institutional goals. In the later decades, the same failure to resist illegal orders growingly marked official behavior greater and greater sections of the civil services have capitulated and obliged illegal instructions to deny people their constitutional rights including to life, liberty and democratic dissent and fail to extend equal protection of the law to people because of their religious or ethnic identities or economic powerlessness ;Sankaran and a few others to name B.D sharma, P.S Krishnan & K.Venugopal from within the bureaucracy who swam bravely against the current refusing to obey unjust and illegal orders. The Civil Service should therefore carry historical blame of failures in setting trend of ‘bureau abominations’ in the country.

Sankaran thoroughly implemented the laws even in a period where the state structure which was authoritarian, brutal and directionless, callous to the needs of the poor. The emergency was projected as if it was needed to serve the poor better through the 20 point programme a diffused populist rhetoric indeed a piece of political marketing.!

There was sharp decline in the role of the state as mediator in social conflicts and the growing loss of faith in the political process among both the operators of the system and the people at large. There was erosion of both authority and legitimacy of the state. The period the institutions of state were found to be doubly vulnerable . There was erosion of institutional spaces. Peoples faith in democratic values were declining. State was proving both incapable of responding to various “awakenings of movements” and unwilling to expand its social base leading to confrontational posture.<sup>36</sup> In other words the state and its



agency was compressing or shrinking in the role (constitutional and institutional spaces of transforming society.

Sankaran as a friend of the poor and the oppressed looked for the potential and possibility of making any Government structure work. He worked the system persistently and diligently till it was forced to respond.<sup>37</sup> He was constantly setting transformative agendas rather than give upon it (state. It was his convictions about principles that made him push boundaries within the system. Whether the system had poor space, no space or large space, he constantly through his reasoning enhanced the available space, never to be in a “laid back” manner to add to the standard argument of civil servants that structure is powerful and the agency can make no difference. By his vanguard position in the state, when he began the mission of releasing the bonded labour a legend and a percept in Andhra Pradesh hundreds and hundreds of people surged this “bureaucrat” to help him fish out as many bonded labours as possible, a few of them stayed with him till the end of his life. People’s participation support and encouragement for his courage and conviction was so immense that the structure simply could not ignore. He therefore stood the powerful Chief Minister of the state against unlawful directions. A responsive state always needed Sankran to reinforce if not at least to maintain the legitimacy of the system.

After his confrontation with Chenna Reddy Sankaran got posting from the center as the Chief Secretary of Tripura. On request from NTR he came back and took up the same position in Social welfare that he left six years

## II

After his six years of service to the people of Tripura as Chief Secretary which is discussed in the previous chapter. Sankaran returned to the State of Andhra Pradesh as Principal Secretary, Social Welfare Department. This was his second tenure as Secretary, Social Welfare Department in the mid and late 1980s.

In addition to revisiting the issue of bonded labour-- of pressing urgency for him and the victims most of whom are Dalits, and of great adverse sensitivity to some political leaders- he took up the issues of atrocities against Dalits which had assumed a menacing form. An important instance was his active intervention in the rehabilitation of the victims of Karamchedu atrocity near Chirala. This was before the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989 act was passed.

In this part, we look at how the state responsible for protecting Dalits from civil societal prejudices itself had become a major perpetrator of atrocities. There was unprecedented state repression against the victims and crushing the spontaneous Dalit protests, and indictment of the state anti-Dalit attitude. Further the character of the state and its machinery is also brought in. Against this backdrop it is attempted to analyse the active intervention of Sankaran against the will of the ruling structure (which itself was the source for the atrocity and culpable state machinery and how he was able to rehabilitate the victims.

### **About Karamchedu.....**

Karamchedu is a big and prosperous village of Prakasam District in Coastal Andhra. The coastal villages of this district are major cultivators of cotton and tobacco and Karamchedu is one of them. The attendant prosperity is evident in the well-built buildings with TV antennae sticking out from the top, and the substantial number of scooters, motor cycles', tractors and cars that slush through the muddy streets. Most of these wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few Kamma landlord families, one of them, Daggupati Chenchuramiah, being none less than the father of NTR's son-in-law and leader of Telugu Desam's youth wing, Venkateswara Rao. Among the others are well-known film producers, not to mention lesser operations of the film business<sup>88</sup>. While not all the Kammas in the village are rich, the fact that their community is about 6,000 strong in a village of 10,000 people that gives a dominant sections of the community terrific power and they appear to have put it to good use. The stronghold they have over this prosperous and 'developed' looking village is astounding. The Madigas and Malas (the two major harijan castes of Andhra of the village numbering about 450 households, live in conditions reminiscent of the heritage of ancient India<sup>38</sup> Most of them own no land (just 16 of the 300 Madiga families possess land, and that too just about half acre, and depend entirely upon leasing in or labouring upon the land of the peasants or landlords. Those who lease in land are forced to perform chores in the landlords' fields or houses, in addition to payment of the rent. The SCs do not appear to have received much help in resisting this domination either from the Left or the Congress. All because, caste-wise it is Kamma gentry and peasantry that has shown a general preference for the Left, especially the CPI (M. In Karamchedu the violence took the

form of electoral conflict, with the landed class backing the Telugu Desam and its allies (CPI, CPI (M, BJP etc. and the Dalits, the Congress (I)<sup>39</sup>.

### **Karamchedu Killing: A State sponsored Carnage:**

What happened on July 17, 1985 at Karamchedu? There was trouble in the village during the recent assembly elections, with the dalits defying the landlords and voting for the Congress. That conflict merely added some more heat to the cauldron. On July 16 there took place an incident that set off the explosion in Karamchedu. There were two drinking water tanks in the village one for the Hindu caste and the other for dalits. At about 4 O'clock in the evening of July 16 a Kamma youth by name Srinivasa Rao was feeding bram to his buffaloes near the tank meant for dalits, some of the bram dribbled down into the tank. A Madiga woman by name Suvartha, who had come to fetch water objected to it, and there was an altercation. Srinivas Rao took out the thickly platted rope used for beating buffaloes, and beat Suvartha. The girl was said to have grabbed at the rope and beaten him in turn. Some more people joined the issue on both sides but the quarrel was soon calmed. That night the Kamma youth came to Suvartha's house and dragged her out, but the neighbouring women interceded and sent away the youth, the dalits thought the issue was closed, and therefore did not anticipate what happened the next day. That night the Kamma youth gathered at a Brandy Shop in the village and took a decision to attack the Madigas. For this their fellow caste men from neighbouring villages were mobilized through openly communal and provocative slogans "if you are born to a Kamma you come out. If you are born to a Madiga, then doubt." A mob of 2,000 to 3,000 men gathered in tractors and motor cycles and surrounded the Madiga houses from all sides. The surprised Madigas ran for life. Some ran into houses, some hid under haystacks and some ran into the fields. But the pursuants were unrelenting, they ransacked houses and hacked at the doors and walls with axes. Duddu Vandanam and Duddu Ramesh were caught running out of their houses and attacked with axes. Vandanam died on the spot and Ramesh four days later in the hospital. Those who ran into the fields were chased and murdered in the fields. Tella Yevasu, Moshe and Muthaia were killed thus. The way the 70 year old Moshe was killed is illustrative of the massacre that took place that day. He just begged them to spare him for he was an old man when they started beating him, he ran into fields. They caught up with him, hacked him with an axe and he fell down on his

back, they dug a spear into his groin and twisted. Muthaiah and Yevasu were also beaten with sticks, axed and speared to death in a similar fashion. Duddu Yesu was another person who was axed and died five days later in hospital, taking the death toll to six. About 20 others were hospitalized with severe injuries on the head and limbs<sup>40</sup>. The women were also treated brutally. They were dragged out of the houses, stripped and molested three young girls, Mariamma (11, Victoria (13 and Sulochana were raped. After raping them a stick was dug into the private parts and twisted. Sulochana who was married and pregnant, was aborted in the hospital. The assault was alarming for its brutality that was not captured by the figures of the casualties. The fact finding committee observed . “The first reaction of the women was that they would not be beaten, but soon they realized to their dismay that everyone was being beaten up indiscriminately. Pregnant women, women with babies in their arms, young girls, old women, and no one was spared. Those who shut themselves up inside their houses faced the worst attack. Doors were broke open, women, children and old people were dragged out and attacked. Those who were freeting were chased, surrounded and subjected to lethal blows. Four dalits died on the spot, two died in the hospital and many more escaped with serious injuries by pretending dead.

Those working in their fields were also not spared. They were chased on tractors and motr cycles. Many of the terror stricken dalits ran all the way across the fields of Chirala. Thus records the fact finding committee<sup>41</sup>.

A mass of sheltered humanity arrived at the Church compound at Chirala. Many of them had virtually run all the five miles from Karamchedu chased by assailants on motorcycles and tractors and even RTC buses. Everywhere women were found sobbing. The trickle of victims turned into a veritable flood. Men and women with blood spotted clothing came running like hunted rabbits into the sanctuary of the church. Cries and wails soon rent the air. The local dalits and sympathizers in Chirala gathered at the church compound to help the victims. The magnitude and intensity of the evidence may be due to the wealthier class and the political clout of the Kammas.

#### **State response to the atrocity:**

For an atrocity of this magnitude, the local Police Constables posted in the village were silent. Even when the police reinforcements arrived they were not of any help to the

dalits. In fact they beat up some of the dalit youth and the first to be locked up in the Chirala Police Station were the dalit boys. The Police were not of much help even in bringing the dead and injured to

the Chirala hospital. No Police or Government official visited the victims at the church on that day. The confusion of sobbing people searching for their near and dear in the crowd increased. It was past 7.30 pm. The local people collected some money and prepared food for the harijans. When the food was served late in the night, many victims were overwhelmed to eat. At the hospital, the situation was even more chaotic. The Doctor on duty, M.V. Ramana says that the injured came on their own. The Police did not give him any requisition. The Doctor did give a requisition to the Magistrate for recording the dying declarations of 22 injured people, but the Doctor did not know what statements were recorded<sup>42</sup>.

It was on 18<sup>th</sup> noon that the District Collector arrived with 150 meal coupons. He asked the victims to move to the Rotary Club premises and only then would food be served. “No, we don’t want your meal coupons, if you want to feed only 150 of us, we are 500. Further, we don’t want to move, we feel safe here”. The Collector was taken aback. “No compliance with orders, no assistance” Veramma a victim says. The Government has not given us anything even after four days of the incident. It’s our own folks, those who labour, pull richshaw, are supporting us and feeding us<sup>43</sup>. The 13 Scheduled Caste petas of Chirala bore the burden cheerfully but as news spread, bags of rice came from nearby villages. On the third day first visit of the Collector with 150 packets of food for 500 members was the first and the last. He never visited us again<sup>44</sup>. Among the 200 kamma youth including some non-youth participated in the raid but the police name just 92, only 72 of them were arrested, after months of effective evasion and final guarantee by somebody close to the Chief Minister that everything would be all right and the rest were still absconding<sup>45</sup>. One thing the police have steadfastly refused to consider is the possibility that the Chief Minister’s relatives by marriage were directly involved in the killing or the conspiracy behind the killing. But the entire Madiga community of Karamchedu have alleged that Daggupati Chenchuramaiah father of Chief Minister’s son-in-law, Dr. Venkateswara Rao was personally involved in the conspiracy. But sadly enough the police refused to investigate the involvement of Daggubati Chenchuramaiah in the conspiracy and had dropped out many of the assailants from the list

of accused. When the fact finding committee, pressed for stringent action, the Superintendent of Police callously replied, “what do you want me to do, gather all thousands of Kammas at the Police Station and beat them up”. One shudders to think of what would have happened then, if it had been the other way round and the labourers had killed half this numbers<sup>46</sup>

The Dalit Mahasabha, filed a private case naming 140 accused including Chenchuramaiah. For this pain of Dalit Mahasabha, people have been suitably honoured by the state government. The leader of the Dalit Mahasabha Kathi Padma Rao was humiliatingly taken into custody under the National Security Act. Both with the police case and the private case, the accused and in collusion with them the state delayed matters as much as possible.<sup>47</sup> Karamchedu has conclusively established that castiest criminals enjoy state backing against Dalits. It exhibited the states culpability. Karamchedu . killing was a crises that the structure created, similarly there are a number of structural crises and challenges that the structure has to deal with. However the structure being morally weak fails by choice to negotiate with crises. Can bureaucrats as social actors with no moral power be called to negotiate. Given the general nature of the bureaucray to be repressive and anti people with elitist orientation committed to the structural choice of behavior it will not be credible enough to stand for meaningful mediation.

Converse to this, Sankaran type of model with its moral credibility, pro-poor orientation are the choice of the people to negotiate for their cause.

### **Shame faced inactivity of political agents:**

The political change in the state in early eighties have brought the Karamchedu Kammas closer to the centres of political power. One of their sons, Daggupati Venkateswara Rao married the Chief Minister NTR’s daughter. They say “we certainly have political clout”. It is not as if NTR has interfered in the case. He doesn’t need to. The police and administration have interfered because of NTR’s closeness to us. Just in case somebody has forgotten let it be recorded that it is only the Kamma gentry that has gathered strength and courage from the accession of NTR to power to undertake an assault of unprecedented degree of brutality. In this pre-mediated assault, the District and the police bureaucracy were even unwilling to register the names of the assailants as a large number of them were related to the Chief Minister. On the third day the District Collector went to the camp at Chirala with 150

packets of food for 500 victims. Further it ordered for arrest of Dalit youths and lathi charge on those who were non-violently protesting. (“making a sit on in the camps”. What is of moment is the national opposition parties were maintaining a shameful silence in the face of these assaults, while the Congress (I was extracting maximum propaganda mileage as the blood flows. It is only to be expected that politicians would make capital out of this brutality especially considering that the Chief Minister’s own people were involved in it. To quote K. Balagopal “in Andhra Pradesh the Congress (I is the only party that can make such capital, for the other opposition parties are too much beholden to NTR for the measly seats they have in the Assembly or Parliament. They have, therefore been content with making condemnatory statements.”<sup>48</sup> The Congress (I was on the roads to make a big issue of it. Legend has it that when a similar massacre took place in Belchi during Janata Party’s rule, Indira Gandhi rode into the village on an elephant to comfort the bereaved.

Vengal Rao, the Congress (I chief over here, was either unable to procure an elephant or realized that the heavy beast would find it difficult to navigate the muddy black soil of the cotton tracts in these monsoon months, and so chose a more modern mode of transport. Neither he nor his party did anything to help the refugees who had camped in the church at Chirala, but they were out to pull down the state government if they can.<sup>49</sup> While political rhetoric is replete with the scenarios of equality, equity and castelessness, social reality is replete with repression and ever stronger perpetuation of the caste order. The state response in the least was not even to announce compensation for the dead which is always a mollified one. In other words, the Congressmen who regard the life and death of dalits as their private demesne into which upstarts like the Telugu Desam party had better not intrude. They made a lot of noise which was caught by the press but were otherwise ineffective since the public had little faith in the Congress (I’s bona fides. It is in this background that an effort is made in this section to present graphically Sankarans’ response to this state created phenomena in the essences of NTR ascending to power.

### **Repressive State Responsive Agent:**

Karamchedu was visited by many teams of journalists, academicians, politicians and others but of no use recalled Bhagat Singh “nothing seemed to progress even after 8 – 10 days of the violence. The District bureaucracy’s apathy continued. Protocol wise the onus of reporting things and preparing for settlement and compensatory benefits begins from the

District collector. But the apathy and prejudice of the District Bureaucracy, police and the civil society were so high the victims refused to accept them any further. The yet to be formed “Dalit Mahasabha members requested the visit of Sankaran, they wanted to speak to none less than Sankaran (Sankaran was already a legend in the State of Andhra Pradesh. As this message got officially conveyed to Sankaran, he reached the camp spot at Chirala. comforted the victims, promised all the best help that can be done from the Government side<sup>50</sup>. This therefore demonstrates the faith that the marginalized had on Sankaran—this was because Sankaran had a track record in his administrative “Style” for working for the constituency of the poor. Right from his post as joint collector, Collector Nellore, Secretary social welfare down to Secretary MORD, he followed what was the mandate of ethics, the law and the constitution. Addressed fundamental issues of importance like land reforms, minimum wages, untouchability and the responsibility of the state to provide basic services never went out of fashion with him. Sankaran’s work conveyed to the public honesty of purpose, this therefore reinforced the faith and support of the peoples movement and dalit movements to his mandate.

The entire district administration and state officers were assigned responsibilities of procuring the information of the family members who were killed and injured and those still undergoing treatment at the hospitals. The details of the killed on the spot and 22 others who injured were provided with jobs in Social Welfare hostels – as Cleaners, Attendants, Cooks, and Watchmen in districts of Ongole, Prakasam and Chirala (mandal. Sulochana whose husband Duddu Ramesh was axed to death by the assailants was offered a post as a cook in the social welfare hostel<sup>51</sup>. Sulochana was unwilling to take up the job as she was innocent and also illiterate and had no exposure of going out of the house. Sankaran convinced her advising that for a few days she can try working, in case if she found anything difficult she may contact him. This encouraged me and I took up the job’, now I am a senior cook, and due to this salary I am able to educate two of my children one is doing Medicine and the other is studying for Engineering” recalls Sulochana.<sup>52</sup>

Duddu Vandanam who was also killed on the spot, had two sons who were agricultural labours and both illiterates. Duddu Srinu, the eldest son was given a job as peon in the Social Welfare hostel. Duddu Srinu a Madiga of the village recalls with gratitude “for



many years we were bonded labourers in the Kamma landlords' houses and we were forced to perform chores in the landlords' fields and houses. A few years before we got released with the help of the Government assistance and started to work as agricultural labourers. We never dreamt that we would be getting to work in Government offices. After my father, Duddu Vandanam was killed we were shortlisted to receive small jobs in Government schools and Social Welfare hostels. I was given a job as peon in Ongole Social Welfare hostel. Within four to five months' time I received the orders. "Our case was pursued with great care and interest by Sankaran. Every week he would visit Prakasham District Office and cleared our files, he personally interacted with us and oriented us about the place and work in Government and Social Welfare Schools and Hostels, because of this job both my sons were sent to Hyderabad for higher studies and now they are working as accountants and bankers in the city"<sup>53</sup>

In similar manner all the six who were killed on the spot and the 22 injured and a few others died later in the hospital were given jobs as hostel peons, attendants, wardens etc. They recalled with gratitude and thankfulness of Sankarans' commitment to respond to the state sponsored atrocity in a promising and unusually effective way.

Every week review meetings were held at Prakasam District Collector Office to get the work in progress of the victims' cases and the status of the files updated. All the case workers were to be present invariably and the files were cleared on the spot across the table. Wherever matters needed concurrence from the Secretariat (through proper channel at Hyderabad he took those files for clearance. After the review meet he would visit our camps at Chirala and enquire our well-being. "On one such visits he was anxious to know what we were eating, he opened our vessels and found for our dinner fish curry, he gave a smile and said good and went away" recalls Duddu Srinu.<sup>54</sup>

During our stay in the camp his visit was very regular – all the local bureaucracy, civil and police used to go with him, this gave us some confidence. For the first time someone from the state power was with us recalled with gratitude and nostalgia the members of Madiga community who had camped at Chirala.

The entire state machinery of Ongole, Prakasam and Chirala under Sankaran's guidance and supervision was engaged in conducting household surveys, identifying the land for cultivation and housing. On a number of visits that Sankaran made to the camps the victims had expressed one thing very strongly, "Sir we don't want to go back to Karamchedu, we don't want to work in their fields. We have no hope that they will spare us. They will abuse and oppress us in the village. Kindly do something to improve our lives. Sankaran as a sensitive administrator realized that the victims of atrocities need special provisions unlike victims of other crimes. Primarily the victims of atrocities and their families needed financial and other logistical support to make them economically self-reliant without their having to seek wages or employment from the very people who have abused and assaulted the Madigas in the village.

Now the biggest challenge before Sankaran, in whose administration the Dalits and the marginalized had reposed faith, was to rehabilitate them in such a manner that they don't have to revert back to the Kamma landlords for their livelihood.

In all there were 280 families (the victims of atrocities who were to be completely rehabilitated. Nearly 20 acres of Government land was identified near Chirala 8 Km from Karamchedu and a colony was made for these victims (Madigas only and was named as "Vijayanagar Colony".

The District bureaucracy had proposed 3 cents of land for each household with the construction cost of Rs.5,000/- for household. When the file reached Sankaran for approval he revised the proposal for 5 cents each an increasing the cost of construction to Rs.9,000/-. He personally got the approval from the Chief Minister and initiated the process of allocation of house sites and monitored the construction of the houses for 280 families along with his team. Within six – seven months incrementally the victims' families started vacating the camp and settle in Vijayanagar Colony<sup>55</sup>.

The colony today is a full-fledged residential area of the Madiga community. It is well connected with road, transport and water facilities. A large number of them have renovated their houses. Many of their children could go to high school education at Chirala and from there to Hyderabad to pursue their higher education over a period of time.

To make them economically self-reliant yet another proposal was put up – ½ acre of cultivable land each to victims family settled in Vijayanagar Colony. He got the proposal sanctioned with the Chief Minister and the details of procuring and disbursing the land to the victims were worked out meticulously. Further surveys were conducted in this regard allocations were done systematically and pattas were issued. In sum it should be said that the Karamchedu victims received complete rehabilitation. Firstly the victims, whose family members were killed received government jobs as peons, attendants, cooks, wardens, gate keepers at Social Welfare schools and hostels. Even when the victims themselves (a few of them were reluctant to take up these jobs as they were new to work in government sectors. Secondly when the innocent victims expressed their fear to go back to their villages in Karamchedu and to again face the abusive landlords oppression. However, they did not come with any alternatives. Panic stricken poor Madigas had no idea of how they are to be rehabilitated. Sankaran designed a strategy of settling them in a nearby area 8 Km from Chirala and named it “Vinjayanagar Colony”. Thirdly to make them economically self-reliant for all the 280 families ½ acre of agriculture land for victims of each family was allotted under government land allocation scheme (in and around the area of Chirala, Vijayanagar and Karamchedu. Just in case if someone says or feels that these were the demands of the victims let it be recorded that the poor victims were too numbed at the killings and were yet to recover from the loss of their near and dear ones. There were cries and wails, people running helter-skelter attending to the injured ones in hospitals recalled the leaders of the camp Babu Rao of (Thimasamudhram and Bhagat Singh of (Chirala<sup>56</sup>. Further the incident took place on July 17 and the Dalit Mahasabha was formed on September 1, 1985 by which time most of the above mentioned strategies for rehabilitation were in progress.

Sankaran thoroughly used the political spaces, indeed the moral vacuum that got created in the state due to Karamchedu incident. This incident was a thorn to NTR for two important reasons – one the magnitude of the atrocity the first of its kind in the state of Andhra Pradesh carried out by the kith and kin of NTR – it indeed became so notorious and infamously known as “the essence of NTR phenomenon”. On the other hand the Congress wanted to pull down T.D.P., Sankaran used these political spaces remarkably effectively in settling the victims of the incident. For instance there was objection to settle the victims at Vijaynagar from the state and administrative level also to grant five cents of land for housing with the revised rate of Rs.9,000/- against the earlier proposal of Rs.5,000/- proposed in the

noting of the District bureaucracy and his junior colleagues at the Secretariat. He personally convinced the Chief Minister NTR... “Sir even this is a paltry relief for so massive an atrocity. They need to be compensated accordingly Sankaran further alerted that the state cannot view this incident of atrocity as an obscure one and to mollify by declaring compensation for the dead and paltry relief to the living”.

In getting approbation for all the “ideas” of rehabilitation patterns Sankaran had to push the boundaries within the system. Although the structure had to unwillingly heed to the “bargaining” of the agency for the victims, a very rare phenomenon which he has been doing although as mandated by the constitution. He came in conflict with the structure and state administration which is generally a “prejudiced” one.

Notwithstanding he ably steered the structure due to the legitimacy he enjoyed from the state and the peoples’ movement thus securing for Dalits a political space and several socio-economic rights. Interestingly there was no pressure for Sankaran to be prejudiced or progressive, under the objective conditions of the structure being repressive. In a case as Karamchedu the repressive nature of the state is certainly much more in evidence with the ruling structures in combination of caste and power, the state undoubtedly represents the dominant interest of the ruling class. Sadly enough the state in this instance even failed to appropriate the rights “agenda”. Sankaran made a subjective preference based on the law and rules even in the face of an unhelpful political government. It was one of the most difficult situations recalls Sankaran “where one part of the government was oppressive and yet another part was sympathetic and tried to carry out the mandate of law”. He further added, it is, a very unique experience of the administration to work with the people, the suffering and the oppressed and strengthening them. The fact that administration was supporting them went a long way to strengthen their hands.”

## II

Andhra Pradesh history records that but “for the indignant intervention” of Sankaran the Karamchedu atrocity would have remained a dialectic without development. Only if they were not to resettle in Vijayanagar Colony and a bit of agricultural land not given to them, it would not have been possible for the breakdown of that wicked inequilibrium that had held these Madigas in a historically frozen state. This rehabilitation gave them certain social and economic edge, since the contradiction also derives its material substances from the

contradictions between their roles as landless labourers (Dalits and dominant land owners (Kammas.

The victims settled at Vijayanagar Colony stated that “they don’t have to work in the fields of the Kamma landlords anymore”. “We work on the land that is being allotted to us since 1985 we have never visited Karamchedu in search of agricultural work or to work on their land for lease”. Say the Karamchedu victims It was this improved material conditions that can enable resistance against the dominant castes. A fundamental socio-economic (development transformation occurred among the Madigas with ownership of cultivable land, resulting in some shift of rural power.

Peoples movements when gets formed as a part of access for liberation, particularly the Dalit(s and marginalized ones, they easily get emasculated as the state resistance to caste oppression is embedded in the system with the bureaucracy showing apathy, the massive campaign from the peoples movement is against the bureaucratic repression. Further people’s movement by itself cannot generate material resources although it can demand, it has to be strengthened from within or supplement their strength from outside. For instance Kathi Padma Rao was arrested in a humiliating way under the national security threat. Many supporters, protestors were arrested and lathi charged to see the movement fizzles out. But in a case like Karamchedu because of the sensitive administrator like Sankaran, the movement was supplemented with adequate response even against the political will. Sankaran received enthusiastic support from the movement and primarily his own undisputed moral credibility made it possible to initiate pro-poor public policy. A Number of victims surged the District Collector’s Office at Prakasam, in the initial stage for clearance of their cases when Mr. Sankaran visited the office for holding ‘review meetings’<sup>57</sup>

The victims primary concern was their resettlement and rehabilitation as most of them killed were bread winners of the family. There were instances where certain files such as appointment orders for some of them were not issued although they were cleared at the District level particularly for those family members who died a few days later in the hospital and those victims whose family members were seriously injured. “We used to meet him at his office in Hyderabad recalled Duddu Srinu, “once when we went to see him at the Secretariat office he readily received us and not only cleared our case but offered a few rupees from his pocket. We were reluctant to take the same, but he convinced us saying I am

like your friend, you may please take this money and come to see me in case things are pending at the District level”. Further he added there was a standing instruction to the Secretariat Office staff not to stop any bonded labourers and victims of Karamchedu from seeing him” recalled Duddu Srinu. “This deed of Sankaran which many of us remember” said Bhasker brother one of the victims of Karamchedu. Among the diverse multitude which surged to bid this diminutive frail under-stated man his final farewell at Punjagutta. Let it be recorded to the testimony of his work that more than 50% of the Dalits who attended the funeral were from Karamchedu. Thus representing the extraordinary range of people whose lives he had touched. “I doubt if there has ever been such a funeral of any civil servant before him” wrote Harsh Mandir. As a mark of respect for the endeavors of Sankaran for the rights of Scheduled Castes, particularly the victims of Karamchedu, in a village called Thimmasamudhra in Ongole district a statue of Sankaran is erected. “Memorials symbolizes gratitude of people and also some as beacon for future generations to emulate people who worked beyond their selves for others”<sup>58</sup>

Babu Rao a very prominent Dalit leader of Thimmasamudhram since 1980s states that for the first time in this village they saw the official vehicle of a person in government authority entering SC basti (that was Mr. Sankaran to enquire about the Scheduled Castes. From then onwards he became very accessible to us and we reached him on all counts for getting our works done.” Because of Sankaranagaru, “this village is well developed and almost like a township”. As a gratitude we wanted to have a memorial of Sankaran in our village. P.S. Krishnan a former IAS Officer who also ceaselessly worked for the rights of the Dalits in this part of the region when he was sub-collector of Ongole<sup>59</sup> was invited to unfurl the statue of shri Sankaran on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

### **Police vs Tribals: A case in Vishakapatnam agency area**

This is yet another interesting case of active intervention of the agent in favour of the poor tribals. In 1987 in Chintapalli one of the agency areas in Vishakapatnam Districts the forest and Police officials colluded and burnt the huts of the tribal families in dozens of hamlets. There was encounter killing and heavy exchange of fire between the police and the naxalities. On an average 10 people from both the sides were killed. In one such exchange of fire a sub-inspector had failed in action. Police people had lost their lives, frustrated over this

situation they set fire to the huts of innocent tribals suspecting them of sheltering the naxalities. A number of huts were burnt, the hutments were running for life and help, their belongings were reduced to ashes.

Sankaran as Principal secretary Social welfare was at Warangal camp. He took this incident to his heart and the very next morning he went and saw all these burnt huts. He spent a long time persuading and giving confidence to the victims against the fear of reprisals from the police added the then SP Balakondaiha. He further sent word for me (Balakondaiha then SP through Aggarwal, then Collector of Warangal. Aggarwal told me to “remain calm” for Sankaran is very furious and hurt over the killing of the poor tribals and burning of their belongings. “I met and wished Sankaran but he refused to wish me back,” after two to three minutes of silence he asked why this happened?. I had to tell the truth because it was Sankaran. Mr Agarwal noted that “he had never seen Sankaran so furious” speaks his frame of mind for the poor and indicates his concern for the irreparable loss to the innocent tribals. “He sternly warned me” recalls Balakondaiha that this should not be repeated. Immediate action was initiated for construction of houses under the IRDP (Indira Awas Yojana he got the houses rebuilt for these tribals whose huts were burnt along with belongings—Reports Balakondaiha who was SP Vishakapatnam.<sup>60</sup>

### **Abolition of Jogini system and their Rehabilitation:**

This is another unique concern of Sankaran which was not attempted by anyone hitherto although the Jogin system was in practice and in existence for decades in this part of the region. When he went ward to ward to fish out bonded labours and to get them released he found this inhuman practice and a social evil. His administration directed efforts towards abolition and rehabilitation of the Jogins. In simple terms liberating them from the old ways of life and helping them to lead a new life of independence and dignity.

The prevalence of the system of Jogin/Basavis/ Parvathis (which is a part of the Devadasi system was observed in large parts of Andhra Pradesh State, largely in Adilabad, Nizamabad, Medak, Ranga Reddy and Hyderabad districts. These women are generally known as Jogins. In districts such as Karimnagar, they are known as Parvathis. In Rayalaseema districts particularly in areas bordering Karnataka state they are known as Basavis. In some districts such as Nellore and Chittoor these women are known by various

names such as Pathamma or Thayamma while the names may differ in different districts, but the basic features of the system are practically the same. A young girl or woman is dedicated to the “service” of a local deity such as Yellamma, Poleramma, etc. On an auspicious day, the girl is dedicated to a temple. The dedication ceremony was being conducted by the Dasaries, Jangams, Ayyavarlu or Pothurajulu. A formal ceremony is performed with a single feast to celebrate the occasion. A string of black beads is tied around the neck of the girl. After the dedication the Jogin/Basavi will not be allowed to marry. The reason for the dedication is usually illness of family members; death of children or other family members; religious vows; or general poverty. It has been observed that most of the Jogins/Basavis belong to Malas, Madigas and Domara communities. In actual practice, the Jogins/Basavis become prostitutes. This is thus a system of exploitation of the girls and women mostly belonging to the poorer sections of the society, resulting in the dehumanization of the women. The girls and women become victims of various diseases and vices as well. The children born to them are treated as illegitimate and socially ostracized. .

Sankaran brought to the notice of the District administration in the State the practice and existence of the Jogin system and the legislative provision for abolition and rehabilitation of this system. He impressed upon the District Collectors to abolish the system and rehabilitate the Jogins. For this purpose all the District Collectors in the state of Andhra Pradesh were directed to survey the incidence of this practice. The District administration under the guidance of the District Collector surveyed the incidence and found that there were 16,287 Jogins in the state. It was also noticed that more than 80% belong to the scheduled caste community. The survey was so comprehensive, it had given the details of the social and economic, educational and health status of the Jogins.

On the basis of the survey, various socio-economic measures were proposed to be undertaken for the eradication of the system and rehabilitation of the families. A Legislation with the objective of curbing this evil practice was already introduced in the legislature. While declaring this practice as illegal, the legislation seeks to impose severe penalties on any person who propagates, performs, promotes, takes part in or abets the performance of any ceremony or act of dedicating a woman or devadasi, Jogin/Basavi etc. Given the backdrop of the legislation for abolition of Jogin system a number of measures of



rehabilitation were initiated by District Collectors in Jogin concentrated districts for the socio-economic rehabilitation of the Jogin women. The basic objective of rehabilitation is to secure economic independence for the Jogin women so that they cannot be socially exploited and simultaneously bring about social change. This certainly required sustained efforts over a period of time which was pursued by Sankaran's administration in both his tenures as Secretary of Social Welfare Department Government of Andhra Pradesh.

The following rehabilitation programmes were implemented in the state of Andhra Pradesh:

**House Sites:**

House sites were allotted on preferential basis either from government lands or by acquiring lands under the programme of acquisition of land by Social Welfare Department.

**Housing:**

Housing for Jogins/Basavis were taken up under RLEGP housing. In order to avoid the Jogin women forming a segregated colony, Sankaran made it desirable to mix up some other non-jogin families also in the housing colony. The housing for Jogins were also combined with normal weaker sections' housing colonies. Along with each housing colony suitable socio-economic reconstruction training centres were also provided.

**Admission of children to schools and hostels:**

There were a large number of children of Jogin/Basavi women were looked down upon. In particular, girls were likely to take to the life of Jogin/Basavi in future and it was most essential that this could be prevented. For this purpose a drive was initiated, that all children of Jogins/Basavis' women should be invariably done in the case of girls. A large number of girls and boys of Jogins were admitted into nearby schools and hostels and a little away so that they were taken away from the suffocating environment. The rules regarding admissions were relaxed and the strength in the hostels was enhanced to the required extent.

**Pensions:**

The Jogin/Basavi women who were old, above 60 years of age found it very difficult to get any support programme. In all these cases, old age pension/landless agricultural workers pension were sanctioned straight away. However, they were warned and motivated

not to dedicate any of younger women/children. And the pension was made conditional to this effort.

**Assignment of land:**

The Jogin women were provided with suitable government land or ceiling surplus land on a preferential basis. Wherever the Jogins/Basavis had their own land, development of those land was taken up by digging the wells under RLEGP, social forestry etc.

**Economic Programme – Skill Development:**

The most important issue was rehabilitating Jogin women who were in the age group of 15 to 45 years, the most vulnerable. In order to liberate them from the exploitative system, suitable programmes were carefully drawn up with reference to their capabilities. Various skills such as tailoring, soap making, pappad making, candle making, exercise book making etc. were drawn up and stipends were given to them from TRYSEM, self-employment schemes, social welfare, women and welfare allotments. After the training programmes were over, adequate arrangements for marketing of the products were also made. In the case of tailoring, stitching of dresses of all social welfare and other governmental institutions were entrusted to them straight away. A number of Jogin women were covered under DWCRA groups so that they were able to secure proper skills and earnings. These Jogin/Basavi women were given the highest preference under DRDA. They were provided with suitable economic support schemes depending on the individual circumstances. The Jogin women were invariably covered under the Scheduled Caste Action Plan.

A number of rehabilitation Homes came up. The Jogin women were also admitted into the Homes of the Women and Child Welfare Department. Further, the rehabilitated Jogin women were admitted into Adult Education Centres and they were taught reading and writing.

**Prevention of fresh dedication:**

Effective action was taken to prevent fresh dedication. The District administration was guided or instructed to gather intelligence on such dedication and take immediate steps to prevent them. The District administration had identified the intermediaries who abet and propagate this and action was taken against them. A number of review meetings that were held in this regard, the District Collectors were impressed upon to hold meetings with the concerned District Officers and each District was given autonomy to evolve suitable

programmes. Further as this was a programme to eradicate the evil system of exploitation of women and weaker sections of the society, sustained monitoring and follow-up action was taken up. Besides, economic programmes, suitable women workers, particularly among the Jogins/Basavis themselves were selected for motivating the women groups, helping them to liberate themselves from the old ways of life and lead a new life of independence and dignity.

The legislation to abolish the Jogin/Basavi system was passed many years ago in 1975-76. However, rehabilitating them remained unaddressed. Sankaran in both his tenure as Secretary and Principal Secretary of Social Welfare Department saw a number of G.Os issued for effective implementation of abolition of Jogins and Basavis.

Intensive surveys were ordered to be conducted and found close to 20,000 Jogins of which 80 percent of them were from scheduled castes. His major concern was rehabilitating them through Nation's innovative and need based programmes. The success story of this was seen in districts of Mahaboobnagar, Kurnool, Hyderabad, Medak districts and a few other districts.<sup>61</sup>

A comprehensive and creative rehabilitation programme was drawn and monitored periodically. Administrators who worked as "by standers" in Administration felt this 20,000 who lived on the fringes of the society seemed insignificant even to consider their problems. But Sankaran not only considered this social evil which was accompanied with sin and sickness needed to be eliminated but to bring them to a "civilized" status was of great challenge and concern.

A comprehensive understanding of Sankaran's work for the constituency of the poor under two different chief ministers of the State reveals the following. Chief minister Chenna Reddy was a constrain even to implement the primary mandate of the constitution such as land reforms and abolition of bonded labour. He repeatedly asked Sankaran to stop the release of bonded labours. The State has no bonded labour; the relationship between a master and a servant is not bonded labour. Sankaran explained to the Chief minister about the existence of life time bondage with enough evidence. The Chief Minister refused to agree with the truth. Sankaran expressed his dissent, he did not let the structure determine his behaviour. His virtue of democratic dissent against a powerful chief Minister of the

State became a legend and a precept. The story was often recounted everywhere in Delhi and among the galaxy of the IAS officers who believed in the constitution mandate—primarily of full filling the vision of an egalitarian society. Let it also be recorded that this dissent led him almost to a resignation. But the legendary Marxist Chief Minister of Tripura, Nripen Chakravarty, invited him to be the Chief secretary of Tripura (which is discussed in the following Chapter

The story of Sankaran vs Chenna Reddy became famous not only because of Sankaran's dissent but more so the bureaucracy was letting the choice of its behavior to the structure. For instance the severe indictment of Civil service was made by the Shah Commission of Inquiry, which stated that they carried out instructions from politicians and administrative heads on personal and political considerations. There were many cases where officers carried favour with politicians by doing what they thought the people in authority desired. In a strong indictment retired Civil Servant Anand Swarup<sup>62</sup> writing in the times of India (16 June 1990) said that bureaucrats had learned to adjust to the compulsions of the politicians. In fact the more enterprising among them learned to anticipate the wishes of their political masters and to deliver unasked whatever is necessary for their personal and political welfare such bureaucrats earn a reputation and get ahead. The trend was from professionalism to loyalty. The values of neutrality and impartiality which were considered the defining characteristic of the bureaucracy have become tarnished. As a matter of fact political role is proving attractive to Civil Servants. C.P. Bhamburi argues that senior administrators have forged alliances with politicians not only to brighten their own career prospects but also to articulate political views and gain greater share of social resources. This bureaucratic goal was encouraged by the way the Indian economy was managed.<sup>63</sup>

Further the dominant discourse is, bureaucrats serve the interests of state actors and how they enforce their preferences and interests. Bureaucrats as one of the state actors, like all social actors work for their self interests and attempt to maximize their utilities. In this process, they have to contend with other social forces based on caste, class, ethnicity or region. In other words what is being argued here is that bureaucrats are essentially political beings who themselves make demands on societal resources for their own benefit. In doing so, they use state institutions and are placed at an advantage because they know that, in the ultimate analysis, the coercive power of the state backs their actions. Further, to succeed, they can mobilize political support through distribution of patronage in the forms of jobs, contracts

and loans. Extending the logic on the same lines many bureaucrats hoping to receive support from the structure in case of eventuality and conflict with the larger societal groups and other agencies there is no assurance that the structure will back up the action of the agency although the structure and the agency are mutual by reinforcing in looting the resources of the state and its people. Contrast to this sankran made a choice in favour of the constitutional mandate and acquired the massive support of the marginalized.

A number of people participated in his campaigns to release the bonded labour, among them included –social activists, academics,NGOs’, school teachers, local leaders. The activities of this administrator gained the support of the peoples movement and never found to be in conflict with any other social actors of the state, except with the structure for bargaining for the constituency of the poor.

By his second tenure as Principal secretary social welfare with Chief Minister N.T.Rama Rao. State was becoming more and more repressive, there was rise in atrocities on the dalits. One of the biggest carnage was of Karamchedu. It is documented as state sponsored carnage. Against this repressive nature of the state we see the responsiveness of the agent. Structure was losing its legitimacy, there was a major political vacuum and Sankaran used these spaces to convince the structure to rehabilitate the victims in a sustained manner. For his active intervention in this regard he received the enthusiastic support of the peoples movement. All through sankaran became a significant social actor of the state

### **Summing up**

Sankaran due to his moral sensibilities in private and public life did not let the structure determine the choice of his behavior. He dissented the powerful Chief Minister of the state when he was asked to stop the release of bonded labours. Sankarans’virtue of dissent became a history, more so at the time in late 70s when administrators, a few by choice and with a hope to get personal favours and few others by force were letting the structure decide their behavior.

Sakaran set normative standards of value and conduct. He stood his ground in a manner in which the bureaucracy and the structure could not dismiss him as an eccentric or misfit His actions were always correct and within the framework of the system. Sankaran through his actions always demonstrated that despite biases, there was spaces within to negotiate. Although Chenna Reddy was a constraint to even implement the basic provision of the constitution such as land reforms and bonded labour abolition act, sankaran used the

available spaces and stretching boundaries within permissible limits showed what moral authority can do, walking squarely in the middle of the bureaucratic path. This is therefore an evidence that a legitimate servant could act and protect the constitutional mandate that is otherwise reduced to a piece of paper.

The unique traits or attributes of the administrator identified by the study includes- accessibility, acceptability, willingness to take risk, emphasis on purpose rather than on process, humane supervisory methods, respect for human dignity and sensitivity to ethics. These traits come in sharp contrast to the "self interest" pursuit of the civil servant. Sankaran's empathic model in civil service encapsulated in ethico-legal-rational model in pursuit of "public interest" forms a complementary to the Weber's legal-- rational-authority. It seeks to establish an egalitarian society. This model is fully committed to the country's constitution and goes beyond self and hierarchy, rule and file and thrives to reach an appropriate client oriented administration. This model notwithstanding the overpowering larger system engages itself in the transformative process.

During his second tenure as Principal secretary social welfare, there was a massacre of dalits in Karamchedu which led to major structural crisis. State was unable to face the challenge, Sankaran derived the faith of the dalits from his "actions", he was called by the dalits to be the prime negotiator. Which he effectively did it. He formulated a commendable rehabilitation package for the victims of atrocities. Sankaran's ideas to rehabilitate the victims in a "full-fledged" manner was not opposed by the state although there was reluctance and political unwillingness to completely concede on the proposals conceived by Sankaran. Due to his moral stature in the system and the enthusiastic support he received from the people's movement his work for victims (which is unprecedented) went unopposed. Karamchedu carnage brought the state into legitimacy crisis, NTR lost his "essence". The culpability of the state and its machinery was exposed, the man in the robe found hard to ignore Sankaran, as a part of strategy to regain his political space. Sankaran's ideas gained political significance for both to repressive state and a responsive state. They actually formed the manifestos for the state at large. The active intervention of Sankaran in rehabilitation of the victims of the Karamchedu atrocity was much earlier to SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989).

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- 51 Based on the discussion with the office staff of Prakasam District who had processed  
these files and worked at the Collectorate Office in different capacities.
- 52 Based on the discussion with Sulochana whose husband Ramesh was killed on the  
spot and Sulochana raped.
- 53 Based on the discussion with Duddu Srinu (a victim of the Karamchedu killing whose  
father Duddu Vandanam was killed in the carnage.
- 54 Members of the Karamchedu victims who had camped near Chirala awaiting  
rehabilitation recount the active intervention of Mr. Sankaran.
- 55 Information from the victims, staff who worked in Sankaran's team, leaders of the  
movement and a few junior colleagues of Mr. Sankaran from Andhra Pradesh state  
cadre.
- 56 Interview with Babu Rao a famous Dalit leader from Thimmasamudhram, who with  
the help of Sankaran pursued the cause of Dalits.
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## **Chapter- 4**

### **Chief Secretary to Government of Tripura**

The previous chapter discussed how the agency fought the powerful structure (the powerful Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh and his steadfast opposition to injustice and power elite in the system who are the cause of the poor and the poverty. He stood firm to protect the constitutional mandate. When he asserted that he would continue to work to free bonded labour and stood his ground, the Chief Minister shouted at him. “I don’t want officers like this in my Government”. Sankaran replied quietly but as firmly. “I don’t want to be in a Government like this”. Walked out packed a suitcase and left by the evening train for Delhi. He arrived in Delhi without a posting or the possibility of one. This journey of revolt led him to become the Chief Secretary in distant Tripura.

The role of the chief Secretary in the Indian federal system is to primarily to head the State administrative machinery and the cabinet secretary. He is the kingpin of the secretariat. He has absolute control over the all the administrative offices of the state. As an adviser to the Chief Minister and as head of the state he performs significant role. He co-ordinates, controls and supervises the activities of different departments of the whole secretariat of the state and brings parity among the works and policies adopted by the state government in different fields from time to time. He advises the Chief Minister and other ministers in running the business of the government. He controls the appointment, promotion, transfer and confirmation of high ranking government officials.

Besides the above role Sankaran personally has overseen the working and implementation of programmes in each of the departments, took long tours to see the requirements of the people and brought them on the bearing of the government. Sankaran toured with the entire team for faster implementation of the programmes, guiding the team and supervising the progress of the work. A unique “style” indeed!. This chapter explores empirically how Sankaran as Chief Secretary of Tripura along with Nripen Chakraborty as Chief Minister widened the developmental horizon of a backward North-Eastern state like Tripura. The structure and the agent worked together and pushed forward the constitutional agenda of social justice with unusual/amazing “pace” and “pattern” records Tripura’s history. The state resources were distributed and re-distributed in order to rehabilitate the poor tribals. An attempt is made to focus primarily on the folklore that grew around Sankaran due to the

administrative works that brought hopes to a large number of people, that protected and prevented them from exploitation and bringing justice to them and his personal example of caring and sharing. A select few of his works are discussed below which demonstrates administrative sensitivity and competence which put the marginalized on the developmental agenda of the state. This work shows how the agent intervened in a novel and seminal way to protect the rights and dignity of the innocent indigenous communities against the populous and aggressive communities.

Below mentioned are a few interesting narrations that grew around Sanakarans' administration:

### **Money Lending, Land Alienation and Sankaran**

In Ambarpur sub-division of South Tripura a bed ridden father of one Sub- Divisional magistrate(SDM, of Ambarpur, 80 years old in age rose with memory of Sankaran to narrate this. Many of the Bengali immigrants had taken to trading and money lending and steadily the Boroks came under the exploitative influence of the immigrant money lenders and traders (Malabika Das Gupta<sup>1</sup> The failure of the Jhum products and revenue to meet the growing needs of the Boroks in a way led to their dependence on non-tribal money lenders and business men for loans to buy necessary items they could not produce. Loans with interests to be repaid within fixed periods of time were given to the Boroks only against the mortgage of their plain cultivable lands .Meanwhile the money lenders would use the mortgaged lands for cultivation. Mortgaging of cultivable land led to dwindling of production for the Boroks, and they fail to repay the debts within the stipulated time; the immigrant moneylenders and traders trapped the Boroks in a debt trap and failure to pay interest within the stipulated period led to permanent possession of the mortgaged lands by the money lenders. Instead of settled cultivation giving prosperity to the Borok farmers, they found themselves victims of money lending system. The entire process led to alienation of the Boroks from their own lands, which further led to their general pauperization (.Bhattacharya<sup>2</sup> A majority of them had lost their plain lands to the non tribal immigrants and were compelled to retreat into interior hills and forests of the state and were met with severe persecution in the hands of the forest officers.

He further stated that the usury of money lending and land alienation were rampant in South Tripura and in parts of these villages – Ambarpur, Udaipur, Belonia, Sabroom etc., and the

Boroks were loosing lands exponentially. Sankaran noticed this trend and issued strict orders to check this scandalous usurious money lenders, which indeed minimized the money lending trade of the Bengali immigrants to a large extent. Further to prevent the Boroks coming under such exploitative influence of “Money lenders”. Sankaran did the much needed such as – higher levels of public investment in agriculture, rural employment, formal rural credits and reliable implementation of wage employment, which gradually replaced to a large extent the oppressive private money lenders and protection of the tribal lands and creating wide variety of economic opportunities.<sup>3</sup>

### **Rescue of brick field labourers brought from Ranchi to Tripura**

Many years ago brick field contractors of JSIC, who were having a large number of brick fields in Tripura brought a large number of tribal labourers of Torpa P.S. (Raneni and were made to work in Mannughat, in South Tripura. The labourers were being ill-treated and exploited by brick-field owners; particularly minor children were being exploited and tortured. It was more than 7 to 8 years since the contractors had brought them from Raneni and had never sent them to their home town as against the contract that they had signed. Wages were as low as Rs.5/- per week as against the promised wage of Rs.8/- per day plus 6 ½ kg of ration by the company. They were treated inhumanly and were confined to the place of work for their protest. They were huddled in a small thatched sheds and poor and un-safe sanitary conditions. A large number of minor children were also being exploited by the brick field owners. This was brought to the notice of K. B. Saxena (the then Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Tribal Welfare – Bihar – by the tribal leaders of Ranchi on behalf of the tribal labourers of Torpa P.S. (Ranchi.

K.B. Saxena a sensitive administrator (on 7th April 1980 requested Sankaran to take measures to get these labourers released and send them to Ranchi. This was just enough for Sankaran. An investigating team was formed headed by Sankaran – Chief Secretary, Commissioner Secretary (Tribal Welfare Commissioner of Labour, Inspector of Factories, Chief Labour Officer, District Labour Officers of each district in the state.

The entire investigation method was so classic and historical in the annals of Tripura administration that even after three decades later people and administrators who worked with him recalled with fresh memory.

The number of brick field operating in 1980-82 were 114 of which 50 were in West Tripura and 36 in North Tripura and 28 in South Tripura, the labour strength was estimated at 14,000

of which 7,969 were migrant workers largely from Chotanagpur and Ranchi. Systematic raids were conducted in these brick fields. Ninety four inspections were carried out in West Tripura District, apart from 16 inspections by inspectors of factories in North Tripura, 64 inspections were conducted, in addition to 22 inspections by inspectors of factories. In South Tripura 22 inspections were done in addition 12 inspections by the inspector of factories. Due to the rigorous and thorough inspections carried out by the Officers of Government of Tripura they could unearth a large number of malpractices which included

- Exploitation of children from Ranchi and Chothanagpeer
- Low wages or no wages at all
- No housing and sanitation
- Absence of passbook for the labourers as prescribed under the act.
- Most of the employees were not having license.
- As per medical facility is concerned, no reimbursement was being done.
- A host of irregularities were noticed in wage and bonus payment.

The migrant labourers were released incrementally from the contractors and principal employers. They were rehabilitated in Government Schools to protect them from further exploitation, until due process of clearance of payment from the contractors was done. As many as 7,000 migrant labourers were released from the State of Tripura from the brick kilns within three months (7th April 1980 – 2nd May 1980).

A number of review meetings were held with the Commissioners of concerned Departments (Labour and Factories in the presence of the Directors and Managing Directors of the Company. In the meeting it was directed to ensure that the “Various provisions are properly enforced in their brick field. With regard to displacement allowance it was found that it was being calculated at a flat rate of Rs.75/-, Sankaran brought to the notice of the Commissioner for Labour and the Directors of Factories that it should be 50% of monthly wages, subject to a minimum of Rs.75/- as the monthly wages are always more than Rs.150/- even at the minimum. The displacement allowance will be much higher. The correct calculations were made in all the cases and the balance got paid to the workers.” Hence the migrant labourers of Raneni and Chottanagpur were sent after they had received their balance of payment.

Several review meetings were held in this regard. It became so widespread in the state of Tripura that anyone who comes across the case of harassment of migrant labour were brought to the notice of the concern departments or to Sankaran's notice directly. The officers of the Department were instructed to be present when the brick kiln workers were leaving to their homes on the specified dates.

The tribal labourers of Torpa P.S. District Raneni on their return to Raneni, reported to K.B. Saxena of the "Rescue operations" by Sankaran. K.B. Saxena expressed his thanks for the exemplary action taken by the Government of Tripura and stated that he was personally grateful to Sankaran for the prompt action that he initiated. On the safe return of these tribals to their homes the Government of Bihar sent its appreciation to the Government of Tripura and gratitude to Sankaran for the good and humanitarian service rendered to the poor tribals of Raneni. Shri K.B. Saxena received yet another complaint from some tribal labourers of Torpa P.S., District Ranchi who were employed in the Janani Brick Industries Kamarbari, P.O Champak Nagar, Agartala in August 1979 by some local contractors who promised them Rs.8/- per day as wages for manual work. In Agartala, however, they were paid only a weekly wage of Rs.5/- + 6 ½ kg. of ration. They were also inhumanly treated and were confined to the place of work in spite of their protest. In March 1980 all of a sudden the company asked the labourers to go back to their homes. At the time of departure they were only paid about Rs.75/- per head and wage due for the entire period were not paid. With great difficulty the Adivasi labourers managed to reach their homes in Ranchi District. The company took this sudden action as a result of the efforts made by Sankaran in respect of tribal labourers from other brick fields. Having heard about the generous action taken by the Tripura government to settle claims of the labourers rescued by them, the Adivasi labourers approached K. B. Saxena for getting their due wages. Saxena requested Sankaran the possibility of helping the Adivasi labourers at this stage as they had already left Agartala. Hoping Sankaran's commitment Saxena forwarded the request for necessary action along with the list of labourers who have filed the petitions. Sankaran pursued the case and saw that the arrears were paid. In the light of the above experience and his own insight into the working conditions of the labourers in brick kiln field, he held frequent review meetings, with labour Secretaries of Government of Tripura and the Directors and Managing Directors of the brick-fields. The rules were tightened up and the minimum wages were ratified. He called



for an intensive inspection to ensure compliance with all the requirements of labour laws. In his investigation and raids a number of cases of ill-treatment of brick-field labourers were unearthed in these parts of the district such as Elanier, Sabriran, Manu and Agartala. While initiatives were taken to rescue the migrant labourers and send them home, steps were also taken to improve the living conditions of the local labourers. Housing was done to all the labourers working in the brick kiln fields. The practice of paying only a part of the wages for a week and withholding the rest to be paid at the end of the season had led to various malpractices. For a long term solution Sankaran suggested that the money be deposited in the workers account, opening a bank account was made compulsory in the name of the workers<sup>4</sup>

### **June 1980 disturbance – Conflict between the tribals and non-tribals**

The violence that erupted in June 1980 shook the entire nation. It caused a shocking toll of death and destruction. The official figures of death up to the 13th July were 539. According to the Chief Minister himself over 1800 persons were reported missing. Many of them were found dead. Over 34,660 huts were burnt, and loss of property was tentatively estimated to be Rs.21/- crores. A large number of families lost all they had and were forced to seek shelter in camps. The total number of persons that entered relief camps was about three lakhs; even after the return of 1.54 lakh persons to their villages under police protection, there were still about 1.63 lakh inmates (0.43 lakh tribals and 1.2 lakh non-tribals on 31.7.1980 in relief camps set up by the Government. In as short as eight days the government of Tripura has set 141 relief camps, 45 of them for tribals. The camps contained nearly 20,000 refugees of whom about a fifth were tribals. The camp population had already begun to fall from its peak figure of nearly 2½ lakhs, 13 relief camps were closed. A large number of schools were utilized to set up camps and other suitable buildings. A number of camps were set up in open grounds where refugees sheltered with bamboo thatching and polythene sheets were set up. In all camps the state government supplied dry rations for the refugees on an adequate scale. In camps in Agartala government, got food cooked by the Bharathiya Jana Sangh in a rental kitchen. Sanitary arrangements in the camp were found satisfactory. The efforts of the state government to provide relief and rehabilitation, from almost every point of view includes supply of rations and cash payment of 30 paise for purchase of firewood and spices. In addition 400 ml of milk per head was being provided to each child up to the age of three. In the case of persons reported sick in the camp, cash payment of Rs.2/- is permitted to arrange for sick diet. The task of supplying of milk to each

camp was entrusted to the Animal Husbandary Department. Government had purchased 20 tonnes of milk powder for making milk supply in the camps. The camps were electrified and fresh construction and installations were done by the Public Works Department.

A number of teams of doctors joined to the relief camps and administered medicines on the spot. Adequate quantities of medicines were purchased by the state government.

Each camp was under the supervision of a camp commandant and his assistants under the overall control of sub-divisional officers. For sanitation in the camps, the sub-divisional officers have been authorized to engage sweepers (4 per 1000 of camp population. A number of camp inmates lost their clothings and utensils, to meet this requirement, a programme for distribution of dhoties, sarees, blankets, children garments and utensils were taken up. About 40,000 sarees, 40,000 dhoties, 20,000 blankets were purchased by the government and distributed. A number of new and old clothings and children garments were purchased by way of donation from voluntary organization and distributed in the camps.

The disturbance had left in its wake a number of women, old and infirm persons as orphans. They were lodged in suitable government institutions for Orphans, Children and Mother.

All families leaving camps were given cash of Rs.10/- per head in lieu of the weeks ration. A polythene sheet of 15' x 12' size was provided to each family for temporary shelter. This formed the rehabilitation measure for affected families on their return to their homes. Wide spread display of police, para military and military force were brought into the state patrolling the affected areas; not only to bring normalcy and to prevent aids from across the border but primarily to restore confidence and sense of security. Most interesting of all is village defence securities were created<sup>5</sup>

The all inclusive relief measures that the State Government initiated and implemented with incredible creativity and commitment impressed the committee to quote "to a problem of such dimension, the administrators response had been impressive. Barely ten days after the crisis, the Additional Secretary in the Central Government Food Department who visited Tripura for the purpose, noted the impressive work done. The Government of India in the Ministry of Home Affairs constituted a seven member committee, chaired by former Minister of External Affairs, Shree Dinesh Singh, M.P. which visited Tripura on 13.7.1980 –

37 days after the incident records that there were 141 relief camps; 45 of them for Tribals, the camps contained nearly 2,00,000 refugees of whom about a 5th were tribals. The camp population had already began to fall from its peak figure of nearly 2 ½ lakh; 13 relief camps had been closed. It further recorded that the state government has a well conceived rehabilitation plans, designed to put the refugees on their feet again. The state government of Tripura had shown blue print of the plans for the development of Industries in (TBCU the tiny sector to absorb artisans among the refugees. The relief phase gave way to resettlement and rehabilitation as fast as possible. Simultaneously efficient arrangements were worked out to deliver in time to resettle people. In this direction the state government had signed various rehabilitation benefits particularly those related to their economic recuperation (agricultural in nuts etc. These arrangements were worked out village by village at an incredible pace. Relief and rehabilitation committees were constituted to supervise and monitor the relief camps and the rehabilitation work. The Chief Secretary himself headed the relief monitoring, the team or group which included the Joint Secretary and Additional Secretary in the Home Ministry. This Monitor Group reviewed the operation of the relief camps, the progress of rehabilitation, the distribution of benefits. The effectiveness of the rehabilitation effort depended to a large extent on its speed. Several of them recalled by the public and the junior colleagues of Sankaran (Tripura cadre who worked with him in different capacities that how Sankaran spared no efforts to hasten the process of recovery by a speedy rehabilitation of the sufferers. He slept only for 2-3 hours those days, a regular review meetings were held in the relief camps directing the concerned departments to provide the needs that the Government had intended. The number of rehabilitation measures that were designed by him for affected families on their return to their homes was in great progress<sup>6</sup> Government assistance was provided for construction of houses to those whose huts were burnt. It is estimated that 36,460 families had lost their houses and moveable properties, hence Rs.250/- would be provided to such families to purchase essential house-hold goods. Affected families were also provided agricultural inputs assistance in kind up to a maximum of Rs.250/- per hectare. Ex gratia assistance in kind up to a maximum of Rs.5,000/- was admissible to the next of kin of persons who have died and an amount of Rs.1,000/- to Rs.2,000/- was admissible to those permanently disabled<sup>7</sup>

A number of new colonies came up after the June 1980 disturbance in most interior of the tribal areas who were just settling themselves in the Government/Khas lands. The most affected places in the 1980 disturbance were Mandai, Mahalaxmi, Ompi, Amarpur and other areas of the Western and Southern Districts of Tripura. The entire village(s) were gutted down, a large number of families had lost their properties, public property was destroyed in Mandai. There was absolutely nothing that survived. All the affected people reached the relief camps and stayed there for month and more. Leading newspapers reported “Mandai” a massacre and a “debris” so were many villages. The post June 1980 disturbance reconstruction and restoration of these villages was more better than what it was before 1980. This village attained the status of township. A number of infrastructure facilities, such as commercial banks, cooperative banks, market places, bazaars, electrification, community halls, schools – Junior basic schools and senior basic schools, roads connected the village, housing was done to all the uprooted tribals and non-tribals of the villages<sup>8</sup>. In lieu of this the villagers wanted to name the village as “Sankaran Nagar”, but Sankaran disapproved the proposal and it was renamed as “New Mandai”. Similar was the case with those number of villages in South and West Tripura that was gutted in the June 1980 disturbance. The members of Dinesh Singh Committee included, Joint Secretary (North East. From the Ministry of Home Affairs Shri P.P. Shrivastav, who was also made Secretary to the Committee. Shri J.B. D’Souza, a Retired Secretary, Ministry of Works and Housing (who was also Principal, Administrative Staff College of India, Hyderabad and Dr. J.D. Sethi, former member of the Planning Commission. On their second visit to monitor the progress of the relief and rehabilitation of the state, “they found it incredible”, to see these villages (villages where arson had taken place with physical infrastructure and rural assets. Most of the villages had attained the status of township. Massive public works were undertaken. Further a Central Government study team which visited the state a few months later was convinced of the progress and sanctioned very substantial central assistance that the state had asked for. Due to the state government well conceived rehabilitation plan, designed to put the refugees on their feet again and some of the action plans already in progress at an accelerated pace, the State of Tripura received from the centre and the neighbouring states a wide range of civil supplies and other assistance<sup>9</sup>

### **Public works and Developmental Agenda of the State**

The most important source of tension between these communities has been the economic factor. The disparity in the style of life caused rancour amongst those who lived in Tripura and who once ruled the State. Sankaran was convinced that the real solution to the problem of Tripura lies in the speedy development of this economically backward state, in the light of its resources and needs and in a manner that ensures equitable distribution of the gains of development. A number of employment opportunities were created for the rural labourer in the affected areas and for those refugees who returned to their villages had no means of subsistence, particularly, as the employment opportunities were few and the refugees themselves had lost all their means of livelihood or other belongings. More than this, the economic lines have been broken, trade disrupted. Hence large employment opportunities were created in the villages to provide earnings to the people. The agenda of food for work programme was accelerated, as this helped people to work to earn a living and thereby secure food. Thus the state government had expounded the food for work programme in the affected areas. This also provided work to those who have been temporarily dislocated.

The state government tapped all its efforts in widening the developmental agenda of the state through various innovative methods using the state resources. Tripura has a vast potential for the development of the forestry sector. Forestry development works were undertaken which included creation and maintenance of plantations, construction and maintenance of roads and buildings and lakes, Jania settlement programme. As he sensed that most of the tribal poor live in and around forest to improve their earning capacities as well as to have settled occupation, particularly agriculture. He felt it was desirable to increase the allocation for the sector. Hence, the funds from Tribal sub-plan were directed to this effort, this whole programme was brought under tribal sub-plan. With Tripura's enormous bamboo resources a paper mill plant was started at Patikaroy in Kailashahar sub-division. This led to large direct and indirect employment and massive development of the forestry sector. In addition it also met the needs of the paper mill and the development of social forestry<sup>10</sup>

## **Land reforms, land ceiling and house sites--**

### **Land Ceiling**

Most of the agricultural holdings in Tripura being very small, the implementation of ceiling law, Sankaran thought has not yielded much of surplus land from the year 1979-1984. In the state of Tripura, 1507 acres of surplus land was taken over and distributed to 1811 landless poor<sup>11</sup>

### **Allotment of Government Land**

A large tracts of surplus land in the state were identified and laid emphasis on distribution of these government khas land to the landless agriculturists, homeless persons were allotted housesites and persons in the category of both landless and homeless were allotted land and house site<sup>12</sup>

### **Restoration**

Unprecedented steps were taken to restore alienated land to tribals except for those whose cases were pending in the courts. Official records estimates that 7,01.84 acres of tribal lands that were alienated were taken from (1979-1984 the non-tribals and restored to the tribals. A scheme was also implemented for providing financial assistance to the non-tribals who were rendered landless due to restoration of land to tribal families. During the period from April 1979 to December 1979, 10,041 number of petitions were disposed off leaving a balance of 25,687 petitions. This was mainly in South Tripura sub-division. Similarly, attempts were made in all the Districts of the State<sup>13</sup>

In restoring alienated lands to tribals some resistance was encountered in areas such as Machmona, Peeharthal, Kathaltala, Challingta, Wepaltilla, Kathaichara, Jampi and also in areas from Khayerpur. There were also some cases of non-tribals taking possession of restored lands even after restoration<sup>14</sup>. But such resistances were subdued with ease as the structure and agency were of single accord on “distributive justice”. A number of petitions for restoration rejected earlier were also reviewed in all the districts and further action was taken. The people of Tripura recounted these cases with gratitude and narrated the efforts of Chief Secretary in this regard. He came severely on those officers who have not taken up the cause with right earnestness and persisted that restoration should be effected with a sense of urgency. No case record was allowed to be kept pending with DMs. All DMs were advised to transfer the cases to SDOs so that they start hearing the cases. The Chief Secretary

insisted that the hearing must be held as far as possible near the place where the land in question is located. He further emphasized in the meetings that court records should be maintained properly/orderly to avoid inconvenience to the poor tribals<sup>15</sup>

### **Allotment of Government lands**

It was recalled by the officials who worked in his team that 70% of his official work was devoted for land related issues such as distribution of ceiling land, restoration of the alienated land, allotment of house sites, land for cultivation and housesites. Thousands of acres of lands was distributed for the first time by the Tripura government remains a remarkable accomplishment in the history of Tripura. Khash/tilla lands were identified in the hills regions, as the plain lands were influxed with migrants. Vast expanse of land was surveyed on war footing, beneficiaries were identified on the spot in the hill regions where the tribals had temporarily settled. A large number of tribals after their lands were alienated had temporarily settled in deep hill regions. Settling them was a herculean task as recounted by the officials and Pradhans (heads of the villages). Ajeer Vidya the then District Collector of North Tripura reminiscenced with nostalgia that a number of colonies came up to give them permanent settlement. In a fortnight the identified government lands were cleared and allotted to the tribals for use. In case where households were to be made the sanctions for the same were to be pursued by the sub-divisional officers. The novel feature of this land administration was the effectiveness and “speed” without leaving it to mere passage of time.

As Chief Secretary he played a decisive role in land administration, set targets for the District Officers for allotting land to the landless poor. He pursued this with “unprecedented haste” recalled Shasin Prakash, the then Collector of South Tripura. This increased the administrative responsibility in all the sub-division of this state. Every month review meets were held exclusively on land distribution and issues related to it said Sukumar Omen the then DM and Collector, West Tripura. Every officer was to give factual details of the land allotted, land available, beneficiaries enrolled, colonies built, housing done etc., as much he himself would have these details from his field visits. In all these meetings held under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary, he invariably stressed that the Revenue Officers must concentrate on various issues concerning land, to have a clear factual picture regarding the

land position and in consonance with the government priorities, to take effective steps for land utilization. He emphasized the necessity of the revenue officers to be completely familiar with the area of their jurisdiction and also suggested that government programmes may be implemented with full involvement rather than in a mechanical and routine fashion. Revenue officers were advised to spend adequate number of days on tour including night halts. It is recorded that not only was Sankaran the first Chief Secretary having night halts in tribal basties, but also made it mandatory for the field officers to observe night halts<sup>16</sup>

A number of colonies for the homeless came up in Tripura. To mention a few. Five colonies were set up near Agartala town, 448 homeless families were settled in these colonies. In Baloma, Sabroom and Sonamoera sub-divisions 400 homeless families were settled. Similarly in Sabroom sub-division 4,062 persons received cultivable lands, 958 families/persons received house sites and 6,269 persons received both land for cultivation and also house sites. In Khonvai sub-division – 655 landless, 740 homeless and 614 both homeless and landless persons were allotted lands. In Sadar sub-division, 641 landless, 866 homeless and 548 both homeless and landless persons were allotted lands<sup>17</sup>

In Kalshar sub-division, 4,464 landless, 1,114 homeless and 4,313 both landless and homeless were allotted land. In Dharmonsgar sub-division, 3,665 landless, 455 homeless and 4,618 both landless and homeless were allotted land for cultivation and housesites. In Kamalpur sub-division 3,665 landless, 455 homeless and 4,618 both landless and homeless were allotted land for cultivation and house sites. In Kamalpur sub-division, 1,823 landless, 907 homeless and 5,041 both landless and homeless persons were allotted land. In Udaipur sub-division, 2411 landless, 380 homeless and 4,704 both homeless and landless were allotted lands. Amarpur sub-division, 101 landless, 91 homeless persons, 9304 persons as both landless and homeless were allotted lands. In Belonia 3,400 landless and 434 homeless and 9,006 both as landless and homeless were allotted land. The structure and agency emphasized time and again that land administration should be speeded up by all concerned local and District administration as this was the most important programme of the government<sup>18</sup>



One of the important priorities being “land administration”. Which received highest priority. Institutional finances were arranged under village housing projects; in addition a scheme was prepared for providing a subsidy of Rs.1000/-per house for beneficiaries in the approved colonies<sup>18</sup>. What is interesting was institutions were encouraged to involve themselves in these colonies as far as the economic schemes were concern.

The above details of distribution of land for homeless, house sites and housing for homeless people pertain to South Tripura for the period of January to February 1980. Periodically surveys were conducted, beneficiaries were identified and khas lands for cultivation, house sites, homestead and house colonies were distributed to the poor tribals. This was done in West Tripura and North Tripura too. A number of land related development activities were carried out such as irrigating the dry lands, supplying of motor engines, providing fertilizers and seeds at subsidy. A number of tank bunds were constructed, these bunds provided very good source of irrigation to a number of leveled lands.

### **Jhumia rehabilitation :A History in the State of Tripura**

A jhumia is a tribal who practice shifting cultivation or jhming. Their life is nomadic in nature and have no settled life. They are the migrant forest dwellers who over a period of time due to influx of immigrants were pushed further inside the forest. As a result the tribals residing in the hills were in fact left with no other alternative but to continue the practice of jhuming. As the states(in the past launched its mega projects a new group of jhumias emerged whose plight was worse than the traditional jhumias. As they were ousted from their moujas without any effective rehabilitation,many of the oustees had no other options but to take up Jhuming in order to eke out a precarious living on the brink of starvation. A case in point is that of Dumblur oustees affected by the reservoir of the Gummti Hydroelectric project at Rymha-Symha in South Tripura (1970-71)<sup>19</sup>

Rehabilitating Juhmias is not a mere exercise in arithmetic as the Juhmias were unfamiliar with the techniques of settled cultivation and also that it was contrary to their tradition. Mahabitha Das Gupta<sup>20</sup> comments rather forcefully that while the government in the past, after independence till 1978 emphasized in weaning of the Jhumias away from shifting cultivation to provide space for the immigrant population and that it was ecologically

unsound, while the only alternative the earlier government offered was resettlement of the Jhumias through settled cultivation. Shifting of shifting cultivators to settled cultivation was not done in a desired and systematic fashion. It did not receive desired attention nor did it provide viable source of earning. This remained a major problem for the state in Tripura.

The earlier rulers of Tripura in order to increase the revenue declared more and more forest areas as reserved and restricting the rights of the Jhumias carrying on Jhuming in the reserved forest, which worsened the economic conditions of the Jhumias.<sup>21</sup> From early 1980 onwards Jhumia rehabilitation received massive government intervention. A number of schemes were adopted, designed and planned to resettle them. It involved right from prevention of usury and exploitation. For a lasting solution to their problems, their economy was diversified. Wherever possible suitable land was provided for settled cultivation. Alternatively, occupations like plantations, horticulture and animal husbandry was promoted keeping in view the preference of the Jhumia households. All the existing policies for their rehabilitations were rejuvenated such as the Tribal Welfare Department's worth Rs.6,570 scheme of 1974-75. The forest department Jhumia rehabilitation programme of 1974-75, colony scheme. The main thrust of the government of Tripura from 1978 has been on improving the economic conditions of the Jhumias and providing basic needs of the Jhumias on weaning the Jhumias away from Jhumming. Jhum seeds were distributed among them. The Jhumias were being encouraged to become members of LAMPS (Large sized Adivasi Multipurpose Scheme through which consumption loans were given them. Outlets were started at LAMPS for buying jhum crops like sesame, cotton, mesta and also Oranges from the jhumias at fair prices. Besides, in order to rise the standards of living of the jhumias, the seeds and fertilizers were being distributed among them. Schools were established in Jhumia dominated areas and other incentives were given to tribals in general and jhumias in particular to encourage them to educate their children, for example one primary school at Uttam Pramodenagar was constructed at an estimated cost of Rs.1,19,751/-. Since unemployment and underemployment are chronic problems facing the landless jhumias; efforts were made in massive way to ensure that these jhumias get employed throughout the year through NREP and SREP. The Jhumias received number of assistance by pursuing non agriculture forest based options, innovative approaches were adopted towards the development of their livelihood. One such strategies adopted for rehabilitation of the

Jhumias is raising and improving the rubber plantation project. Rubber plantation project was conceived to provide lucrative alternative to to jhum cultivation. These measures were designed to improve the yield from Jhuming and to provide relief to the Jhumias pending their rehabilitation. This was the first time in the State of Tripura which recognized the right of the Jhumias to carry on jhuming till all the Jhumas are effectively rehabilitated. A large number of grass root level organisations like the Panchayats and the ADC were made to actively associate with these programmes to ensure that the selection of beneficiaries for such schemes does not lead to the cornering of the benefits by the haves among the Jhumias.<sup>22</sup> A large number of Jhumias have received permanent rehabilitation from the Tribal Welfare Department and families already covered by various rehabilitation schemes were given grants at enhanced rates. A case in point is the Plantation Development Corporation rehabilitated 70 Jhumia house holds in Padmanagar and Warrangbasin on rubber plantations which were being developed and maintained by the Jhumias brought under the scheme on a collective basis. They started earning regular wages for their work on the rubber plantation while the trees were minature. Once the trees attain maturity each beneficiary family will be allotted as many rubber trees as will provide them with year-round employment and a reasonable income. With a view to implement the project speedily and effectively, the government decided to establish a co-operative. The Tribal Rehabilitation and Plantation Corporation Ltd.to ensure settlement of Jhumias and landless tribals engaged in growing rubber. The beneficiaries were provided with economic holdings on which rubber trees are planted and they work as wage labourers till the trees mature. After the trees attain maturity, each beneficiary family is allotted a rubber plantation of 1.5 hectares, which can provide a family with year round employment and an adequate income to sustain itself. Similarly 50 families in Paschin Jahayala (Sadar sub-division, 144 families at 5 centres from Dulanagar, Kailashahar, Kamalpur, Anarapur and Khowai (sub-division. Nearly 220 families were rehabilitated in Kodar, Karbook, Danibdas Doluma, Ramchandraghat<sup>23</sup>

The ADC (Autonomous District Council) was directed to develop Oranges, Orchard in the Jampin and Seakhan ranges for Rehabilitating Jhumias. The forest department was guided to make fresh efforts to rehabilitate jhumias by emphasizing social forestry, forest plantation and pisculture under the primitive group programmes<sup>24</sup> Thus a large number of short term and long term measures were initiated and implemented by the government for rehabilitating

and improving the economic conditions of the Jhumias. The success of these measures was also attributed to the development of backward and forward linkages like the development of adequate transport and communication facilities which the state had undertaken. Tripura's history records that in a short span of 5 years 2,500 Jhumias were rehabilitated (NSS report and AFC survey)<sup>25</sup>

### **The mega project of jungle clearance:**

This was one of the major mega projects of Tripura administration. Narratives spin in this regard. A majority of them sold their plain lands to non-tribal immigrants and compelled to retreat into interior hills and forests of the state. Mahabika Das Gupta opines, "a large number of immigrants in both the plains and hill areas of the state has led to the displacement of the Brokos, from their land, the conditions of Brokos had further worsened with the handing of the reserved areas to the state government and restriction of the movement into the forest. King Ber Bikram Keshore Maniknya (1925-57 had reserved for the Boroks a large area of fertile cultivable lands by order in 1943 covering the areas of 1,950 sq. meters. Many families had settled in reserved areas and had taken to settled cultivation by 1940s. These reserved areas lost its balance, mainly after the partition of India and Tripura's merger with the Indian Union. Thereafter the rate of inflow of immigrant population increased sharply forcing the state authorities to utilize the unreserved areas for building refugee colonies for the immigrants. Thus the tribals had no option but to move into the interiors of the hills and forests. These tribals had settled there for decades and were living on the forest produce for livelihood and survival. Day in and day out they had threats from the revenue, police and forest departments. For long they lived in fear recalled Tripura National Volunter .(T N V leader)<sup>26</sup>

Sankaran identified large jungles, hill regions where people were residing unauthorized, these jungles were surveyed, cleared, beneficiaries identified – land allotment certificates were given; "homeless colonies" were made. A huge district staff from their respective sub-divisions were deployed for the "jungle clearance" project. The work was expedited (2 to 3 months, which, of course, varied from sub-division to sub-division. This provided a paradigmatic shift in the tribal development strategy. Similarly a large number of tribals had settled in the hill region on unauthorized government lands and (Tilla lands reserved forest

areas for many, many years were given permanent settlement certificates and survey numbers allotted. For those tribals who had settled in the reserve forest area, the Commissioner of Forest was urged to re-order the same forest land to government khatha on special grounds wherever possible; others were shifted to the nearest location and “Khas Khatan” land allotment certificate was issued. There are a number of such cases, quite often the Chief Secretary came in conflict with the forest department in this regard<sup>27</sup>

### **The stolen Goddess of the Jamathias and SR’s response:**

In the June 1980 disturbance a tribal Goddess of the Jamathias named (Goreiadevatha) was stolen by some miscreants. This was represented to the Chief Secretary Sankaran by the Jamathia Pradhans and leaders. They insisted that they want nothing less than the similar model. However, no one could give accurate sketch of how the Goddess looked like. The entire file shows only the design, animation and prints of the model of the lost Goddess. Sankaran constituted a committee, constituting of the Jamathia Pradhans, Jamathiya leaders working in Tripura government, SDO and Thasildar of the Jamathia Para. A number of models were printed and reprinted to finalize the face of the Goddess, until the tribes were convinced of how it actually or most likely looked like. In a week 30 to 40 such prints of ink and wooden carvings were shown to Jamathias for approval. Once the model was finalized it was designed in gold and the Chief Secretary himself presented the tribal Goddess to the Jamathia tribes a week before Dassera along with some Pooja items that they had lost during the riots. The Jamathia tribes recall this incident with deep gratitude and appreciation. There were no one in the Jamathia Para whom I had met did not know this incident of “return of Jamathia Goddess.” Further they recalled with refreshing memory the incident that happened 20 years ago<sup>28</sup>

Jamathias are orthodox, tribals, very ritualistic in their culture and worshippers of idols, stealing of their age old goddess something that could have led riots. A sensitive administrator like Sankaran could avert further riots/disturbances by promptly and sensitively responding to this petition of the Jamathias.

### **In Bhashyamani Para:**

This is a village in South Tripura subdivision of subroom. During the June 1980 disturbance a number of Tribals from this para were arrested, naturally many of them were bitter about the happenings. There was wide spread belief that the arrested people were innocent and therefore they be released. Sankaran explained to them particularly to tribal women who were aggressively vociferous in their representation. Sankaran assured them that only those who have committed offences, will be arrested and government will not do any harm to any innocent person, particularly tribals. He also emphasized that he and his team travelled all the way to know their difficulties and help them.

As assured within a couple of days after thorough enquiry by the police department, a number of review meetings were held and the innocent tribals were released. There was a great joy in the village. In his subsequent visits the tribals of this village welcomed Sankaran and his team with the traditional Kak Brook dance, spreading flowers around. On my visit to this village the tribal women and Pradhans had relentlessly enquired about Sankarans' welfare and whereabouts<sup>29</sup>

### **Leasing of land for the missionaries of charity for establishment of a Leprosy treatment centre at Kunarghat:**

For many years the missionaries of charity working in Kolkata appealed to the Government of Tripura for land to establish a Leprosy Rehabilitation and treatment centre at Tripura, but had taken it seriously. Mother Teresa met the Chief Minister and Chief Secretary in 1982, both of them were convinced over the purpose, immediately allotted 57.38 acres of land on a nominal rent of Rs.1/- per annum. Today it is a prominent centre for leprosy treatment in Tripura. It is, the place for Home for the dying destitutes and abandoned persons. It has a dispensary where the poorest of the poor can receive treatment. The Revenue Secretary, Government of Tripura was asked to prepare the draft proposal, the matter was placed before the Council of Ministers<sup>30</sup> for recommendation and approval (on obtaining the approval of the Chief Minister it was placed before the Council of Ministers for ratification.

### **Sankarans'viists:A folklore**

Tripura is only size of one district in Andhra Pradesh. Sankaran visited virtually every village especially every tribal hamlet in Tripura. He travelled miles and miles on foot. There

was no village in the state that Sankaran had not visited, stated a forest officer, Mr. Das<sup>31</sup> The novelty of his tours was not so much about Sankarans' travelling miles and miles on foot from Agartala but the fact that with him followed "rural infrastructure/asset". His travel team included invariably and consistently all the district officers, CE (PWD, Director of Agriculture, Director of Animal Husbandary, D.M. & S.P of concerned districts, SE (PWD, Director of Tribal Welfare, Deputy Director of Agriculture, D.F.O, Superintendent of Agriculture, Deputy Registrar of Co-operatives, S.D.O., BDO, Project Director (D.R.D.A, Inspector of Schools and a number of other officers of that particular division and sub-division<sup>32</sup> The purpose of the presence of these district and division officers was to issue orders to different divisional officers for sanctions and approval on the spot as and when they visit the village after inspection and enquiring the beneficiaries themselves what their needs were, the officers were even directed, how to go about each asset development agenda. For instance under the homeless colonies immediate steps such as measuring and surveying of lands, identification of beneficiaries, financial allocation for family were completed on the spot. This facilitated speedy performance from the concerned officers of the division.

The visits with the team mainly was intended to ensure a proper appreciation of the problem in these villages and to make special efforts to improve the living conditions of the people and to create confidence in them. He would give instructions in a detailed manner for identifying the best schemes from among available ones so as to benefit the poor tribals – it could be under horticulture, fisheries and animal husbandry. These schemes were identified and sanctioned, the Departments were to ensure proper implementation. In the subsequent visit along with the same team would be the inspection of work and a review of its completion; such a strategy had a far reaching impact on the delivery system of the administration as no delay in implementation of the sanctioned scheme was ever excused. Thus the district administration was run on war footing to execute the schemes approved in the visit to villages. The primary purpose of Sankaran's visit to the villages was to "see the conditions of the tribal villages and developmental works assigned to each departments of the district, its progress and to further give impetus to the schemes; for instance a link road was sanctioned from Khowai to kamalpur and Kantanar, this was a major road link which will not only reduce the distance considerably but also provide an alternative route to Kanasahar from Agartala. He frequently visited these villages to review the progress of these works. Once

when he took up a visit to villages in Ekjanchaha in Amarpur sub-division on {7th October 1982, it is observed that while visiting the Nagrul colony he found that all the tribals had settled in the homestead land given to them. When he visited the house of Shri Kurban Ali, it was found that he had no stock of any foodgrains or other provisions in his hut. He found that the families in the rehabilitation colonies were in a state of distress. Immediate instructions were issued to DM(South to work out suitable economic rehabilitation schemes for these colonies for implementation. The purpose of his visit primarily was to discuss various problems related to a village with the local people and re-assure the people that all their problems would be taken care of or looked into by various departments of government and to improve conditions and ensure that the benefits of developmental works are derived by the people of this village<sup>33</sup> Poor tribals often waited at the village entrance to submit their petitions, their general request was for a school or school building, bridge, road, electricity, old age pension, drinking water supply, establishment of a bazar or market, medical facilities and provision of other amenities. These petitions were promptly carried and directions were issued to different departments (on the same day to pursue the cases<sup>34</sup>

A few petitions also included complaints against the Revenue and Forest officers. They were warned not to harass the poor tribals, instead pursue and plan for their development. This story is often recounted by the Pradhans and junior colleagues of Sankaran, folklore that has grown around him. There was standing instructions from the CS office that the police officers were to accompany Sankaran in their civilian dress and not in uniforms as the police (among the tribals was seen as the primary violators of human rights and abuse of power. The tribals feared the police and forest authorities so much so, they go in hide/run for life at the very presence of the police. Thus enabling the tribals of the village to express freely their requirements recalled Mr Shanay ( the then SP South Tripura)<sup>35</sup>

An instance that is often recalled by Pradhans and junior colleagues of Sankaran included during one of his visits to an interior tribal village, Sankaran spoke to an elderly tribal women and asked her what she wished to have from the Government of Tripura; the “woman did not know who S.R. Sankaran was but perhaps guessed that he was a big man from Agartala, the State capital. She reportedly said “I do not want anything but please remove the Forest Department and the police department from here”. There are many such aparyhal stories



related to Sankaran's visit to the villages – a group of tribal people met him in a village where he was staying requested him to protect them from the revenue, police and forest department which in effect meant that they should be saved from the Government itself. Darlong the (Director of Tribal Welfare reminisced that Sankaran travelled often on foot miles and miles. Once when he was reaching a village on hill top he slipped and fell from 10 feet height into a small pond, his right arm was slightly dislocated. He didn't stop his journey that he had proposed (to reach a village. Notwithstanding his fall, there were instances where he had to travel by raft, since many villages in the initial days of his CS were not connected with roads and bridges. He was never tired of talking to the villagers, appreciating their problems and solving them on the spot by giving instructions to the Directors of the concerned Departments<sup>36</sup> His travelling miles and miles had become well known and popular as Sankaran's Dhandi Yathra in the state of Tripura. A young SP of South Tripura (Rajendhra Nambodhari who had protocol wise accompanied Sankaran a couple of times on travel mustered courage and remarked Sir "this is like Gandhi's Dhandi Yathra" Sankaran shrewdly denied the compliment and replies I am a "lesser man"<sup>37</sup> On his travel Shahsi Prakash (DM, South Tripura recalled with nostalgia – It is a history, no one before or after among the Chief Secretaries or junior colleagues had taken such extensive touring of the villages. He did it with a mission of reaching the unreached, understanding their requirement delivering the goods helping them to derive the benefits from the Government and creating "rural asset" and "socio-economic infrastructure". His memory was incredible. He remembered almost all persons and villages (that he visited by name. He disposed the files personally, particularly those schemes that were to be implemented and the new schemes to be initiated. The proposed and pending public works in each village pertaining to specific Department of a village were on his finger tips. District Officers cannot "bluff" or misrepresent issues<sup>38</sup>

## **Education**

Next to land reforms, land restoration and distribution of surplus land, education in the state received priority during his period (1979-85)<sup>39</sup> Sankaran pursued the provision of education to the tribals and the poor in a special way. From KG to higher education he had personally dealt and monitored the establishment and progress of educational institutions in the remotest of remote hill regions of Tripura. Tripura got well equipped with schools. A number of

ICDS blocks came up in each division of the district rural projects, to mention a few in Saliemi, Khawai, Kunarghat and Taharjaba, Udaipur, Modai, Sabroom, Saddar, Koadshar, Belonia, Sousnulla, Amarapur, Dharmanagar sprang up. The plan chart worked out by the Education Department has brought out the picture clearly indicating that from 1977 to 1983 the total enrolment in primary education and higher primary education increased from 1,03,104 in 1977 to 3,80,112 in 1983. The percentage rate of drop out however showed a general decline, which was attributed to a large extent to the mid-day meal scheme<sup>40</sup> Sankaran personally monitored the performance of ICDS scheme very closely. He quite often emphasized that without improving the performance of school education, we cannot see the high growth rate of enrolment in “higher education”. A number of review meetings were held to improve the overall growth of school education in particular. In all the meetings held he expressed concern over the problem of stagnation at Class I, Class II and Class III levels which was alarming<sup>41</sup>

He convened a meeting of (Commissioner Secretary, Education, Director of School Education, Deputy Director of Education, Senior Research Officer in which he emphasized the need to arrest stagnation (stagnation refers to children not passing their exams and being retained in the same class by providing the best talents to the children. Teachers should impart stimulating education to the children to ensure their healthy mental progress. To prevent stagnation, the Chief Secretary pursued the modification of examination system and abolition of the examination fee as these factors also accounted for stagnation<sup>42</sup>

Year after year and in all plan programmes ,administrative sanctions were granted for practically all social welfare schemes. School education and higher education received top priority. The plan outlay under education had increased year after year and from year to year. There was a rise in the number of primary schools. On 1st July 1983 there were 2050. On the same year 281 new schools were opened under the tribal sub plan. A number of junior basic schools were started, a few junior basic schools were upgraded to senior basic schools. It was unheard of in the past recounts the Tripura Tribal Welfare Students Association leader. He exclaimed and observed “even in the Jhumia rehabilitation centres fifteen schools were established.” At least one primary school with at least two teachers were ensured from 1980 onwards in almost all the hamlets and habitations of Tripura. By 1985 there were very few school--less habitations(meaning thereby all the villages had schools, it could be junior basic

or senior basic stated the then Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Education, Shri H.Milhalajan and Sniha, A.K. Roy, Director of School Education<sup>43</sup> Without any delay Social Welfare hostels came up for tribal boys and girls, they received scholarships. He paid personal attention to this issue. A frequent review meetings were held in this regard, instructions were given to the concerned sections of the Departments to fully utilize the funds, funds were used to improve the facilities such as furniture, teaching aids, play materials etc. required for various Schools<sup>44</sup>

A large number of respondents including the tribal activists, Pradhans, members of general public and officers from the state, who worked with him stated several social welfare hostels came up during his tenure. To mention a few Kanchanpur, Umakanta, Bodylung, Arundhitinagar, Abhoynagar, Mahalakshmi, Tulshibai, Agartala boys and girls hostel. Udaipur, Kumarghat, Mandai, Jaganath bai<sup>45</sup>

In a number of hostels arrangements were made for additional accommodation as the number of children exceeded the sanctioned strength. For instance when the Chief Secretary was on tour to villages in Mohanpur Block, a number of tribal boys represented about paucity of hostel accommodation in Agartala Schools. Sankaran viewed this issue quite seriously and personally visited the hostel and found that these tribal boys of Class XI and XII were residing in contiguous room of the school and were treated as paying guests. Convened a meeting with the Director, School Education, Director of Tribal Welfare and instructed them that in the School there was one building originally used a craft shed which was available for use. Further the School hostel also had an old dining hall, as the PWD is underway in completion of new dining room for the hostel. He suggested that the tribal boys may be accommodated with necessary renovations made to the old dining hall, which accommodated 24 students of class XI & XII and were treated as regular boarders. Similarly at Umakanta Academy on his visit to these hostels, he realized that the sanctioned strengths of 50 was fully utilized in addition 13 boys of classes XI and XII were staying in the hostel as paying guests. He instructed the Director of School Education that the Tripura Foot Ball Association has vacated a medium sized room. The workshop of the school has some further space, which can accommodate another 8 (eight) boys. Another building occupied by Social Welfare and Education Department, that was likely to be vacated can accommodate about 12 (twelve) students.

Keeping the above in view, the Chief Secretary issued orders that all the vacant places and likely to be vacant be used for the accommodation of another 24 to 25 tribal boys of Umakanta Academy. At Tulsibath Higher Secondary School against the sanctioned strength of 108, there were 125 student in the hostel of which 17 students were termed as paying guests. He found that these hostels were having vacant lands within the compound of the School and hence issued orders for construction of buildings to accommodate some more students. The funds for the same were diverted from the Tribal Welfare Department under the centrally sponsored scheme for construction of girls' hostels for ST's without further delay. Lands were procured from the Forest Department with great difficulty after dealing with the Forest Department for their unimaginative manner of dealing the cases of social and economic importance. One such case was getting the allotment of forest land for Brahmacharra High School. A number of repair works of Anganwadi Centres were taken up under the SREP. All other improvement in school facilities such as construction of compound walls, school repair works, play grounds, workshop sheds etc. were attached under the SRE or with food for work programme. For the first time in the State, Residential Schools came up. To begin with one at Karbook, Srikarbari, Purna Joy Chandharyparna and Harina School buildings, hostels and staff quarters came up in a fast pace. Posts were created for the purpose. In addition to residential schools a few Ashram Schools for tribal boys also came up to shelter and educate these tribal boys and girls who became orphans due to the June 1980 disturbance. The first one was at Harina in Sabroam sub division followed by Home for orphanage at Kupara, Ramnagar, Narshinagar, Shantinagar and at Abyognagar. He personally pursued the water supply connection and construction of sanitary blocks with the PWD as Kupama Ashram School for the tribal girls. Several provisions were made to the ashram school for girls at Abhoygnagar such as drinking water supply, sanitary conditions, furniture. vocational training centres attached to State Mahila Ashram at Abhoygnagar<sup>46</sup>

Tripura has 19 different tribes, each tribal community has an account to narrate. Due to considerable widening of scope and content of the social welfare programme in Tripura during his tenure as Chief Secretary in social sector such as "Education", the amenities that were provided to tribal boys and tribal girls, a network of social welfare hostels and residential schools and a few school-less habitations, regularizing scholarships. All this led

to an increase in the percentage of enrolment in the State recalled tribal activists and the officials of the State who worked with him<sup>47</sup>

A sizeable number of tribal boys and girls who had completed their degree approached him for further assistance. Through his contacts in Calcutta he sent a few of them to Calcutta to pursue higher education and a few of them to coaching centres. This considerably increased the intake in Tripura Public Service Commission and other State competitive examination. Having heard of his pro-poor administrative culture, a tribal woman of Darlong community approached Sankaran at Secretariat and requested that “she was a mother of nine children; of them her fifth son Jhon Tangluri Darlong has shown progress in his studies. In that academic year he was completing his Bachelor Degree and aspired for higher studies, but we cannot afford his higher education. This was just enough, he enquired from the boy what he wants to do, Jhon Tangluri Darlong was interested pursuing his Masters in History. Sankaran approached his friend at JNU, Prof. Mahajan and requested to help the boy and took complete responsibility of this tribal boy, Jhon Tangluri Darlong not only completed his Masters and cleared his UPSC (exam Indian Foreign Service). In 2004, Jhon Tangluri Darlong was serving as India’s foreign representative at Panama.

There was no person in the Darlong community who was not aware of this “legend”. The then Director of Tribal Welfare who was himself from the Darlong tribal community and the Pradhans recalled with cheer and gratitude of this deed of Sankaran<sup>48</sup> On the same lines there were a number of such instances<sup>49</sup> from different tribal communities which went into the pages of history. During his six years of CS besides institutional help through network of social welfare programmes, a large number of tribal boys and girls were helped by him personally. Even after he left Tripura a few of them still continued to receive help and assistance. Tripura is essentially backward in “education”, besides agriculture and industry. The next crucial factor underlying the communal conflict is the widening gap between the tribals and the non-tribals in terms of their respective economic development, it is the slow development of occupational skills that has left the tribals behind their non-tribal fellow beings. The state governments own documents admit that the “Scheduled Tribes have remained much of the time outside the development process”. The benefits of modern education, communication and health care remained concentrated in the western segment of

the state leaving out large areas in eastern parts inhabited by Scheduled Tribes far behind in respect of various amenities”. It was in this direction that Sankaran’s administration had worked particularly empowering the tribals through education minimizing the gap between the tribals and the non-tribals. This special act of the state to educate the tribals to empower them had removed the isolation that they were facing and were getting integrated themselves with the mainstream. Such an attempt by the state also helped the tribals to prepare for the challenges of the new industrial society. A fairly large number of them got absorbed into various jobs at the state level. The post 1980 saw the increase in the intake of tribal boys and girls into the Tripura State Services<sup>50</sup>

### **Public Works undertaken: Roads & Bridges**

A number of roads were laid connecting the remote of remote Goan Sabhas. The roads of importance that Sankaran worked out and directed in the State of Tripura is a history. A large number of villages, were linked with roads for the first time said Chief Engineer, N.K. Sinha<sup>51</sup> and Superintending Engineer, N.K. Dutta<sup>52</sup>, Agartala. All road works were meticulously designed and monitored by him. A few significant ones in the State are –(For details see reference no<sup>53</sup>

Sankaran had proposed and saw that the bridges are completed at a fast pace a of bridges and tribal areas got connected to different parts of the state. To mention a few bridges on Sonai River a strategic position as it connects Cheneum Bagar and Mandai Guan Salrma. Bridges on Khowai River at Paryghat near Khowai, this reduced the distance to Khowai by 10 kms. The Bashyamunipara – Jantra Nagar bridge was done at a appropriate location which facilitated several villages of the Goan Sabha to have mobility and connected to the main stream. The bridge on Burima at Jampaijala was completed in a record period of 5 months and opened for traffic. This bridge connected a large number of tribal villages and provided a direct link from Champinagar to Udaipur. A “causeway” was constructed on Sonai river, just after Sonai Bazar, this work linked a vast tribal areas in Sardar and Khowai sub division<sup>54</sup>The SPT bridge at Tribhangachara was of great importance to the tribals of this village as there was water inundation and had to use wraft for crossing the river. This caused a lot of hardship for their own transport and of transportation of agricultural produce such as bamboo etc. which was their only source of earning. Similar was the case of completion of Barkutuari – Pitra bridge. In Khila Maitlong two bridges were completed in a record period

of a month each. Although these bridges were only 7/2 kms each. Tainauri – North Maharani bridge, ASPT bridge was laid on Rangacharia the largest bridge in North Tripura which measures 34 kms upto Kosharaibari touching Amarpur – Talchaina and Dangapar Bhage on Gunti at Ranganali and on Maqurunchana were also proposed and completed in a stipulated time<sup>55</sup> In view of the sensitive nature of this area, all efforts were made to speed up the work. He frequently visited these areas to inspect and take stock of the position/status of the work under progress. Most people of the region – Goan Sabha Pradhans, tribal officials, state officials particularly the PWD Engineers of all ranks recounted with extraordinary passion about the network of roads and bridges. A road went to a tribal village which met a long felt demand. The isolation of the people ended. A teacher happily travelled to school. A Market developed and local products of the farmers got a better price. All these were welcome changes that followed a road that was proposed and planned by Sankaran<sup>56</sup> With the development of a road there was appearance of motor vehicle in the bazar, surplus could be marketed properly and the money earned through sale of the surplus crop could be invested. With the construction of the road, a market was started and they invested the capital in trade. These roads of importance has brought a tremendous change in the common villager, among the jhumias and the landless too. A number of tribal children enjoyed travelling by road and loved to go to school, they came in contact with the teacher as a civilized man. Children from far flung villages travelled to colleges in the town which was not a practice in the past due to absence of a road to the towns and villages. The villager himself goes to the town and compares the price of his products. The landless and tribal Jhumias compare their wages to that of the urban labourer grew more conscious. Sankaran's "roads of importance" led to rapid urbanization. What was a small market earlier because a semi-town and a town in few cases<sup>57</sup>

Nripen Chakravathy though suffered loss of memory affectionately enquired of Sankaran and said the people of this land will tell about Sankaran<sup>58</sup> He reportedly recalled many years later even after Sankaran left the State quite often with passion and nostalgia the roads and bridges in the state laid by Sankaran. As and when Nripen Chakraborty toured and travelled to the villages and towns recalled with fond memory, a road which was proposed and completed under the direction of Sankaran and this road has led to rural rich or neo rich class in the village "blame it on Sankaran" "a laughter follows," as observed by officers who

travelled with him. On valedictory session of the meet of the Social Scientists of the North Eastern Region under the auspices of Calcutta University Nripen Chakravarty gave a talk on “Roads to the villages: Whether Development or Exploitation”.

### **Implementation of SREP/NREP**

He personally chaired the coordination meeting of different departments with regard to implementation of SREP/NREP and other employment generating projects in different distress areas and particularly Goan-Sabhas. Every district officer was instructed and guided to locate distress pockets. He personally visited almost all the Goan-Sabhas in the villages to identify any report of starvation anywhere and would take up the matter of providing work in distress areas. Thus a number of distress pockets were covered by providing work, varieties of work were distributed under SREP & NREP, such as – construction of road, excavation of fishery tanks, excavation of mini bunds, land reclamation work, construction of bridges, plantation work, normal maintenance works such as (road, schools, bridges etc. excavation of number of water reservoirs, construction of school buildings on government khas land. The object of the two schemes (SREP and NREP stand to provide employment to at least one member of the family was fully implemented. The government of Tripura intensified the implementation of SREP & NREP programmes in the state, Sankaran visited almost all the “acute distress pockets” in the tribal villages noted the public work to be undertaken and instructed District Officers to identify the type of work to be allotted to the poor-villages. A survey team was formed at the sub-divisional level to identify the families and type of work. The poor villagers in almost all the villages were assured of work throughout the year. For example under the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme, at least one member of the landless family can work up to 100 days in a year, as the maximum days of work under this programme comes to an end, the same poor laboures were allotted the SREP/NREP programmes. It was mandatory for officers to hold a survey and submit a detailed report in this regard every three months, which should necessarily cover “distress pockets” in different villages, schemes and strategies for providing works. This was pursued by the Chief Secretary with unusual vigour and passion. He cautioned the District Officers that there should be no report of starvation anywhere. Everyone should be provided with employment of one or the other nature<sup>59</sup> Among the officials and the activists of the state, the SREP and NREP was popular as Sankaran’s Rural



Employment Programme and Nripen Chakraborty's Rural Employment Programme due to their personal involvement in providing employment to the rural poor.

### **Summing up**

In a study as this both the state and its agency (Nripen Chakraborty and S.R. Sankaran) endeavoured to push forward the constitutional mandate, within the institutional framework. Through the elaborate legal and constitutional guarantees (a socio-political arrangement), the first and the foremost objective of the agent was enlargement of the individual rights and taming the state power for socio-political development. This was thus done within the constitutional state of India as a framework which is based on normative and ethical principles.

The evidence strikingly shows that 80% of the State's administration was expended in identifying the Government surplus land, distributing to the landless tribals, rehabilitating them through various developmental schemes and a wide variety of asset building projects undertaken by the structure and the agent. Integrated development of land formed the primary work of the State. The State and its agents were mutually reinforcing the agenda for social justice with commitment and imagination. A number of tribal development schemes were launched. Among the tribals of the most interior hamlets too, a few neo-rich class emerged because of the social infrastructure that was created by the State. Since the structure and the agent were absorbed in protecting Human Rights of the marginalized, they acquired strong legitimacy. Thus its capacities to hegemonies its citizens increased and the coercive apparatus of the State was not used in a ruthless manner (in any context to deal with people's protests and struggles. For instance, the communal riots of 1980 June disturbance were recognized as a politico-economic cause. One of marginalization of the Boroks due to massive land alienation causing economic disparity between the non-tribals and the tribals. This was met with proper distribution of the available resources and reconstructing their lives with adequate social and rural infrastructure and asset building schemes in the villages. Contrary to the dominant anthology on states repressiveness and the agitation of many socially "marginal groups" who are at the 'periphery' of the society maintain that the democratic state of India has been derailed because instead of "negotiations" with the deprived groups on demands it has become confrontationist.

Here we see agent pushing the boundaries within the system forward by “accommodation” of demands of the laboring classes or the poor tribals. The long pending demand of Autonomous District Council (ADC) of the Tribal Communities which received important thrust in the ideologies of various socio-political organizations of the indigenous peoples of the state like the TUJS & TNV etc. The displacement of the tribals due to some important public projects of importance were taken up only after thorough negotiation with the concerned tribals and after rehabilitating them completely through equal compensation for displacing them. There was a standing instruction in the Government of Tripura which was not the practice in the previous displacement projects. Dhamlur power project at Ryhma - symha a case in point; which had led to peripherisation of the majority of the tribals and in fact complete denial of their rights for basic existence.

The agent designed and re-designed social road maps for empowering the peripheral social groups by way of allocating more resources on education, health, implementation of land reforms. Plan after plan the outlay for education increased. Tripura in 1980–83 had reached a few “schoolless villages”(meaning; almost all the villages had schools a land mark achievement in Tripuras history. A humble request from a few poor tribal boys of Udaipur sub-division to have hostel accommodation led to the construction of number of hostels in such peripheries which led to the growth of education in the region empowering the peripheral social groups.

The Marxian position that bureaucracy is an instrument of exploitative ruling class may hold good in general but Sankarans’ model presents counter evidence that there are certain possibilities and also space where a civil servant given the position, freedom, political support, personal conviction, moral fibre can take the side of the exploited . But this only suggests the possibility as it is more exceptional evidence than general phenomenon.

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Commissioner, Home (Police Department, Harijan Cell.  
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6. Reference: No. F 2(1 – CS/81 dated 2.10.1981. Chief Secretary’s visit to Mandai along with concern officers of the Department (to inspect the work at Mandai.
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8. Reference No. F. 2(1 – CS/81 dated 22.06.81 – Minutes of the meeting held by Chief Secretary on 20th June, 1981 Regarding Revival of Institutions and Market at Mandai. Copy forwarded to Chief Minister, all Ministers, Special Secretary to Governor.

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10. Ref. No. F. 2(1 – CS/82 dated Agartala, 11th August 1982.
11. Annual Administrative reports on land ceiling for the year 1980-81, 1982-83, 1983-84 Government of Tripura (Land Reforms.
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14. Reference: Proceedings of the meeting held by Chief Minister and Chief Secretary on 18.01.1981 at 10.00 a.m.  
Reference: Observations, comments of officers on restoration of alienated tribal lands.  
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15. Reference: Proceedings of the meetings held by Chief Secretary on 21.01.1981 along with District Magistrate and Commissioners on the method or procedure to simplify the procedure for restoration of alienated land.
16. Field Notes: interview with D.M. and Collectors who worked with S.R. Sankaran.  
Ajeer Vidya – DM (West Tripura, Shashi Prakash – DM (South Tripura, Sukumar Ommen – DM (North Tripura, Anil Misra, Personal Secretary to Chief Minister (then. Also discussions with Village Pradhans and local tribal leaders of Tripura Uppiajathin Juba Samithi (TUJS and Tripura National Volunteers (TNV.  
Reference: Record of discussion held with the Chief Secretary in his chambers at 12.30 pm on 30.06.1983. Discussion taken in Tribal Advisory Committee meeting on 2.07.1983.

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18. Reference: Agenda notes for discussion in the meeting to be held on 18th February, 1980 – Allotment of land and verification of applications thereof.
19. Ref: D.O.No. F. 4(3 – CS/1981 – Records on complete compensation and rehabilitation of the ousters of Decubur Hydroelectric project of 1970-71.
20. Malabika Das Gupta: “Land Alienation among Tripura Tribals”, opcit pg. 2113.
21. Malabika Das Gupta, Continuity and Change in Tribal Societies: A Study of Economic Aspects of Tribal”, Jumia Society in Tripura”, in Milton S. Sangma (ed.. Essays on North East India, New Delhi Indus Publishing 10; 1994, pg. 142 – 163.
22. Reference: F. No./04/80/SDO/KMP/CON dated 26th July 1982 – Office of the sub-divisional officer Kamalpur: North Tripura. This file is the minutes of the coordination meeting of different departments held on 27.7.82 at Ampassa in the office quarter of the Executive Engineer, PWD. This records of the various rehabilitation programmes taken up for the Jhumias.
23. P.K. Kar, Rehabilitation of Jhumias – A new horizon in Sudharshan Bikash Saha, “Tribes of Tripura”. A historical survey, Standard Photo Imaging Company, Ramnath Majimdhara Street, Calcutta – 9.
24. Ref. No. F 2(1 – CS/81 dated 27.01.1981 – Discussion on the progress of work at Jhumia centred hamlets with Department of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, Forest Officers (Plantation Sector, Education Department.

25. National Sample Survey Report (1980-85 and Agriculture Finance Corporation Survey (1980-85.
26. Field Notes: interview with Tripura National Volunteer President Mr. B.K.Hrangkhal .
27. Reference: Proceedings of the meetings held by Chief Secretary on 18.01.1981 at 10.00 am with regard to land allotment and jungle clearance for the purpose. Present were the DMs of the District.
28. Field Notes: interview with the Jamathia Tribal leaders, officers of Tribal Development and District Magistrate of the period (1980-81 Ajeer Vidya also see office files on orders and directions for restoration of the stolen Goddesses (F.No. 2(23 – CS/ Jamathia pasra1980 dated 10.10.1980.
29. Field Notes: interview with the Tribals of Bhasihyamanipara and officers of South Tripura. Mr. Sinha who was BDO during S.R. Sankaran's tenure as Chief Secretary.  
Ref.: F.No. 3(21 – CS/1980 dated 25.12.1980 – Visit report of CS to this village.
30. Memorandum for the Council of Ministers, Agartala, dated 7th January.
31. Field Notes: interview with Forest Officers of Tripura – Mr. Das and Mr. Khan. Both were Forest Officers posted in South and North Tripura during Sankaran's tenure as Chief Secretary of Tripura.
32. A Specimen copy of the tour report is appended at the end for quick perusal of the nature and purpose of tour(s).
33. Reference: F. No. 2(25 – CS/1981 – Visit report of the Chief Secretary to Ekjanchara, Amarpur Sub-division, South Tripura.
34. Field Notes: interview with officers of the District – South Tripura, North Tripura and West Tripura. Mr. Shashi Prakash, Ajeer Vidya, Sukkumar Omeen.

35. Field Notes: interview with Police Officers who were in Mr. Sankaran's team who often accompanied Mr. Sankaran during his tours. Mr. Shanay (SP, South Tripura, Mr. Rama Rao (SP, South Tripura and Mr. Rajendhra Namboodhri (SP, South Tripura.
36. Field Notes: interview with Mr. Darlong, Director for Tribal Welfare, Government of Tripura In 1980's Mr. Darlong was BDO of North Tripura who accompanied Mr. Sankaran in his tours to villages.
37. Field Notes: interview with Mr. Rajendhra Namboodhri, SP, South Tripura, 2004.
38. Field Notes: Interview with Shashi Prakash, the then District collector of Soth Tripura-2004
39. Field Notes: interview with Mr. Bhattacharjee, P.A. to Mr. Sankaran at Chief Secretary's Office, 2004.
40. Reference: No. F 2(1 – CS/80 dated 24.05.80 – Brief record of discussions held by Chief Secretary on 23rd May 1980 regarding plan programme under social welfare. Also communications found in – No. F 2(1 – CS/80 dated 25th September 1980.
41. Reference: No.F 2(1 – CS/83, dated 6th October 1983.  
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43. Reference: No. F 2(1 – CS/83 dated July 20th 1983 – Brief records of the discussions held by Chief Secretary on the 20th of July 1983 regarding Educational Programmes. Also Field Notes: interview with A.K. Roy, Director of School Education, Shri H. Mukherjee, Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Education.



44. Reference: No. F 2(1 – CS/83 dated 28.6.83 – Brief record of the discussion held by Chief Secretary on 29th June 1983 regarding hostel accommodation for Tribal boys in Agartala town and hostel related issues for implementation. Also see F.No. F 2(21 – CS/83 dated 20th June.
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46. Reference: No.F 2(1 – CS/83 dated 29th July 1983. Brief record of the discussion held by Chief Secretary on 28th July, 1983 regarding Education Programme. Hostel facilities for Tribal boys and girls.  
Reference: No. F 2(1 – CS/83 dated Agartala, 30th June 1983. Instruction to the Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Education to facilitate accommodation to tribal students.  
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48. Field Notes: interview with the Presidents and Pradhans of the Tribal Communities.
49. The narration given by Mr. Darlong, who was then the Director of Tribal Welfare. As Mr. Naveen Darlong was the first Tribal boy to have cleared the IFS – Indian Foreign Service form the State of Tripura and from a backward Darlong Tribal community.
50. Field Notes: interview with the representatives of Tripura Tribal Communities TUJS and TNV.
51. Field Notes: interview with the Chief Engineer (1980-85, PWD, Mr. N.K. Sinha.
52. Field Notes: interview with Superintending Engineer, PWD, N.K. Dutta.

53. Reference: No. F 3 (1 – CS 183 dated 13.2.1983 – Brief record of discussions held by Chief Secretary on 10th February 1983 regarding roads of importance. This document is a complete record of prominent roads that was initiated and completed by Mr. Sankaran.
- Reference: No. F 2 (1 dated 15.11.1983.
- Reference: No. F 5 (6 PWD (W/80 Government of Tripura Public Works Department, Agartala.
- Reference: D.O.No. F 2 (1 – CS/83 dated 20th November, 1983.
- Reference: No. F 2(1 – CS/81 dated 18.06.81 – Brief record of discussions held by Chief Secretary on 17th June, 1981 regarding roads of importance in West and South Districts and other important roads include: Jampuijala, Champaknagar, Bolkari – Juraniakhola, Ithabatha-Pramodhnagar, Amorandranagar-Takarpara, Bishalgach-Golagnath, Golaknath-Takayal, Khaerapur-Patnivia via Kokra--Khamr, Engineering college Mandai via Sachin Iranad Chachu Bazar – Mandai, Mandai Bhriku basbani-Champaknagar-Kumarghat-Iefunga-Abhicharan bazaar, Abhicharan bazaar-Borakha, Jarulbachari-Bogh Khoar-Damumipara-Gaborya Khayorpur-Kamlghat via Gancha Kobha, Juramia-Guripal colony, Kalachara – Khowai, Chebri-Sikariberi-Manik Bandahr, Agartala bypass. Udaipur—Killa. Udaipur-Neghai, Bankumari-Pitra, Pitra-Dawnchana, Pabitrar Dawanachana, Pabithar Darjelingahari, Noabarrickhutu-Pabitrarambri, Dhajanagar-Jampjalla, Natibary-Thilakim, Kudralchara-Thikalkum Damancharaa, Amarpur(North, Tolchara Ranagbari, Jathanbari-Reshangbari, Rangmathi–Saebang, Soanichahra, Jailaya-Korbok-Bhagabantilla, Amarpur-Bogaja, Amarpur-Gandachana via Maintilla, kamalpur-Anandh Bazar-Bhanparina, Manu-Chaumanu-Gobindabari, Chailengta-Kablingskhan-Sherumum, Anandh Bazar-Mancahra–Kamalpur, Kamalpur-Kailasahar, Ompimagar-Dangabari road, Puldangli to Chawman direct roads Field Notes: interview with PWD Engineers of Agartala.
54. Reference: No. F 3 (31/82 dated 7.6.82 – Brief record of discussions held by Chief Secretary on 7.6.82 regarding bridges in South, North and West.
- Reference: No. F 3(32/82 dated 8.7.82 – Brief record of review meeting held by CS regarding progress and completion of the bridges.

55. Reference No. F 3(35/82 dated 9.8.82 – Brief record of discussions held by Chief Secretary with officials of South Tripura regarding the completion of bridges in South Tripura Sub-Divisions.
56. Chief Minister of Tripura, Sri Nripen Chakraborty often narrated in all his speeches about the “Roads of Importance – A Village Road whether towards Development or Exploitation”? See Dr. Sudhanshu Bikash Saha – Tribes of Tripura, Ahistorical survey, Standard Photo Imaging Company, Ramnath Majimdhara Street, Calcutta – 9.
57. This was so popular among the officials, general public and Pradhans of the village.
58. Field Notes: interview with Shri Nripen Chakraborty, the Former Chief Minister of Tripura on 4.7.2004 at Tripura MLA’s block, Agartala.
59. Reference: F 2(1 – CS/80 October 26, 1980 Chief Secretaries Communication to Commissioner, CD Department, Government of Tripura Agartala. Instructing the Commissioner for intensifying the food for work programme.  
Reference: No. F 2(1 – CS/80 14th December 1980, Agartala. Directions to Secretary, PWD for construction of bund to prevent erosion of cultivable land under SREP.  
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## **Chapter - 5**

### **Post-Superannuation: Moral Public Engagement**

Sankaran served in the Governmental system for more than three and half decades, right from his position as Assistant Collector till his retirement as Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), his concern for the poor, the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes was unfailing whatever be the position he served. As a Civil Servant he carried his mission with courage of conviction and honesty of purpose. This conviction had roots in Indian Constitution and its egalitarian vision. The Indian State and its agency has been mandated to carry forward the vision and Sankaran strongly believed till the end that it was this task that he was to carry on. Civil Servants, he observed “have to carry out the tasks in terms of the constitutional mandate and the legal frame work. Being experienced and competent permanent officials in diverse fields, they constitute an elite corps with a vast authority vested in for being exercised in public interests to achieve public policy objectives”. He stayed his full tenure and all through he lived by humane value system bringing about a paradigmatic shift in the administrative work ethics, demonstrating the virtue of dissent to the unlawful directions of the political masters. He pushed forward the mandate of the constitution with remarkable effectiveness. His social justice vision of an egalitarian society formed the manifesto of the state. He designed many programmes for justice and welfare of the socially most deprived communities. He never wavered from that basic objective, notwithstanding the changing character of the State. Sankaran looked for the potential and possibility of making any Government structure work. He worked the system persistently and diligently till it was forced to respond. He never set his agenda as per the terms of his political bosses, but followed what was the mandate of ethics, the law and the constitution. As a result fundamental issues of importance like land reforms, minimum wages, untouchability and the responsibility of the State to provide basic services never went out of fashion with him. He did not scoff at the system, but believed implicitly, that the state had to deliver. He used the office, status and power for the poor. He commanded utmost respect at all levels demonstrating that moral authority that one carries, was able to surpass all forms of formal authorities. Sankaran’s moral power was backed by his intellectual capabilities, administrative competence, unfailing memory of the rules, regulations, procedures, laws and several legislations. The formal positions that he held at various levels were always a menace

for social change, therefore he enjoyed the trust of the people and Nation at large. He was so clear in his goals that neither the political power or vested interests could impair his work and whenever they interfered he educated them, persuaded them if necessary defied them holding that the constitutional mandate was far superior to all the Pragmatic political compulsions and other considerations. He demonstrated beyond any doubt that civil servant can carry on social purpose if only the Weberian legal rational authority backed by the requisite individual moral authority.

Having served the Indian people through the state for almost three and half decades he superannuated and sought no other positions of power. He chose to live in the state of Andhra Pradesh which he served with dedication in the early 1990s. He returned to the state after serving as Secretary, Rural Development, Government of India. That was the time Naxalite Movement picked up further momentum in the state and the state not being able to respond to the demands of the movement. This mounted up lawless violence to contain the movement resulting in spiral of violence and counter violence. Sankaran thought and believed that Naxal movement was a political question and they did represent the aspirations of the poor and deprived. It was his deep concern for the poor that propelled him to carry on another significant experiment of his life, the formation of Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC to negotiate for a “democratic space”, to do something to contain the violence and loss of human life. It was his “Moral Power” that had the momentum or the gravitational force which penetrated into the institutions of the state, in the absences of formal power. The state and the movement recognized his unique moral stature that both Government and Maoists felt compelled to respond to his appeals, and defend their policies with. In the absence of any formal power as an agent of the state, he created an agency outside the state power from the members of public credibility in the state of Andhra Pradesh a group called CCC – to negotiate between the state and the CPI (Maoists. His another important endeavour was total outlawing of manual scavenging – an exceptional campaign for ending the humiliating age – old practice of people of particular castes being forced to clean dry latrines with their bare hands and carry human excreta in baskets on their heads. He regarded this to be the most dreadful manifestation of untouchability and caste. A decade of Sankaran’s leadership “the Andholan led to the substantial decimation of this – centuries old evil in many parts of India. This was through a combination of judicial interventions,

compelling accountability of public officials and a non-violent mass campaign for self-respect by people engaged in this vocation in which they burned their baskets and demolished dry latrines.

This Chapter presents in two sections two of his important post-retirement engagements as indicative of the willingness to take up difficult and challenging task; the first discusses on the history of CCC, setting of CCC, efforts of the Committee and assessment of CCC. The second section presents his role as National Convener of Safai Karamachari Andholan.

## I

### **Historical context of formation of CCC: An overview (1997 – 2005)**

The constitution enjoined on the state the obligation to bring about social transformation; but this obligation inscribed in the constitution never get fully translated into practice, resulting in the emergence of various movements, during the past fifty years, principal among them being the four decades old Naxalite movement. This movement is political in nature but has distinct social and economic roots. The movement as a part of the peoples struggle has taken different forms and adopted a variety of strategies and instruments during its long course. There has been correspondingly a series of actions on the part of the state and its agencies.

A situation has arisen in Andhra Pradesh where the state and its agencies show little respect for law and life and Naxalite parties too practice reckless violence regardless of peoples concern and sufferings in the discourse of violence that has been engaging the state and the Naxalites, the society has been getting increasingly brutalized and people becoming insensitive, often reduced to being passive spectators. The violence seems to be self-perpetuating which neither the state nor the revolutionaries are able to control<sup>1</sup>

The continuing spiral of violence and all round suffering has severely curtailed the right to normal and peaceful living of the common people and the right to live with dignity on to the agenda of the Naxalite movements and Government. In the words of the Convener, Sankaran in the first report titled: In search of *Democratic Space* (1998<sup>2</sup> the Committee considers that a meaningful search for a permanent solution is needed, breaking away from the “*Chicken or Egg*” kind of arguments of violence and counter violence and with a new set

of terms of democratic debate bringing in people and their issues and aspirations to the centre-stage of the State policies or the Naxalite parties the right to life and the right to livelihood and the right to dignified and honourable existence in society". The Committee located itself in a transformatory paradigm and considers that a people's perspective should inform our understanding/interpretation of movements, events and instruments". He adds The CCC that was formed in early 1997 in Hyderabad derived/received its impulse from a number of shifts that had occurred in the state and the Naxalite and Civil Liberties movements necessitating a fresh intervention. Further that year Andhra Pradesh which was mired in fiscal and political crisis in 1995 was just beginning to recover through an economic restructuring loan from the World Bank<sup>3</sup>. As the new Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu emerged from the quagmire of intra-party politics to take charge of the state, he was firmly supported by the World Bank and a slew of international consultants. A new rhetoric of "Andhra Pradesh" on the rebound was prevalent everywhere. Naidu dealt with opposition ruthlessly and cunningly whether it was the Congress or the Naxalites. Under the steady assault by the police, the Naxalite movement suffered significant losses. This loss was as much due to encounter killings of its cadres as due to the fact that many of its former cadres turned rogue and formed vigilante squads, infiltrating and attacking Naxalite squads and civil liberties activists at will. The response of the Naxalite party, the Peoples War (PW, to these changes was brutal in the sense that its cadres began to kill suspected informers and coverts and successfully targeted police officials and politicians. This response was also somewhat chaotic because unlike in the past, it was unable to offer credible, rational and transparent justification for the actions of its militants. Also was the simmering differences in the Civil Liberties movement regarding the need to take a public stance on the excesses of the PW – a taboo subject until then reached a boiling point. The Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee was on the verge of a split with its General Secretary Balagopal taking firm and overtly critical stand against the PW's excesses even as he continued with unremitting exposure of police excesses<sup>4</sup>.

This was the broad context that the committee of concerned citizens was formed largely on the initiative of Sankaran who decided to bestow his time and attention to this problem. The committee located itself squarely in a political spectrum of the state and the Naxalite movement.

### **About CCC, its composition and CCC at work:**

The group which came to be known as the Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC) was not formed at the instance of any authority or organization but emerged on its own hoping to represent, the voice of a large democratic section of the society which was tired at being reduced to a mute spectator of the growing atmosphere of fear and violence created by the action of the state and revolutionary parties. The Committee of Concerned Citizens is an independent collective of individuals sharing a deep and common concern on the climate of violence, brutalization, insensitivity and suffering that is prevailing in the state, particularly the Telangana districts in the context of the Naxalite movement and the approach of the state in dealing with the issues.

The Committee considered that there was a need to analyze the problems in terms other than violence or counter violence, and look at it mainly as a question of people's aspiration thus bringing the people to the centre stage of the state policies as well as the revolutionary programme of the Naxalite parties. The Committee believes that it is possible to find a long term direction for a democratic restructuring of the society which alone can completely address many of the questions which are being faced by the people. The Committee seeks to take a people centered view of the situation and locates itself in a transformatory paradigm<sup>5</sup>.

Primarily the Committee is committed to democratic and Human Rights and humane objectives which inspired our freedom struggle and which are inscribed in the Preamble, the fundamental rights and directive principles of the Constitution, thus providing the basic starting point for political and institutional processes to work continuously for social transformation. These were sankarans' beliefs all through his work.

### **CCC It's Composition:**

The (CCC largely self-appointed Committee of Concerned Citizens – a group of fifteen members – began its work tentatively through a series of meetings with different sections of the public in Hyderabad, the State capital. No group with a shared public purpose could have been more diverse in its composition – convened by the former Civil Servant (S.R. Sankaran,



the CCC's members included-- K. G. Kannibaran, National President of PUCC, Prof G. Haragopal, D. Narasimha Reddy and B Chandra Shekar Rao of the University Of Hyderabad, Potturi Venkateswar Rao, Veteran Journalist . Prof K. Jaya Shankar, former vice-chancellor and Dr. B. Janardhan Rao and Dr. Papi Reddy of Kakatiya University, Boja Tarakam, Senior advocate, P. Janardhan Reddy, former MLA from Karimnagar District, Smt, K. Akileswari journalist, Jeevan Kumar of HRF and Ananta Krishna freelance journalist. Each a public figure in his own right. Despite the fact that the members differed significantly in their political views, all of them believed that the main goal of the committee should be to break the cycle of violence – counter violence, so that a broader process of democratic restructuring of the society could be given a choice<sup>6</sup>. Notwithstanding the members of the Committee being from varied background of different inclinations and angularities. He succeeded in carrying all the members through this remarkable experiment. Not that it was a smooth affair. There were differences of perceptions and opinions, at times it was lively and at times serious but at the end there was consensus. There was not even a single instance where the members differed with each other publicly. This was primarily due to the clarity of purpose and honesty of cause that Sankaran demonstrated all through. Thus the committee became such a formidable force not only because of its profile, but also because of its activities and statements, its collectiveness indeed became its strength. Sankaran rowed the boat so safely till it reached the zenith of a historical experiment in October 2004. The first of its kind in the country.

### **CCC at work:**

The initial work of the Committee consisted mainly of being able to travel through the villages and meet as many people as possible in the villages and towns. These travels undertaken in four successive rounds were extensively documented based on the field notes and addressing itself primarily to the top leadership in the Government and the PW alike, the committee initiated its engagement with both, the Government and the PW, by making a series of broad suggestions to bring down the violence in the villages. In mid-1998, with the publication of *Democratic Space*<sup>7</sup> the CCC set an agenda for a broader political debate in the state forcing the Government and the PW to engage seriously with its missives. In its early responses, the PW reacted sharply by picking on particular expressions in the CCC's statements as indicative of its bourgeois liberalism (a characterization that it probably

continued to hold on to till the very end but over a period of time the PW relented, in fact decided to take the recommendations of the CCC as opportunities to streamline some of its own actions<sup>8</sup>, with the Government the CCC's success was rather limited. Although a number of senior ruling party politicians from the North Telangana were supportive of the effort, Chief Minister Nadiu's response left much to be desired<sup>9</sup>. In meeting after meeting the Chief Minister insisted that his Government was in the right, and in one instance went so far as to claim that the Government had the mandate of the people for its "encounter" policy.

Additionally occasional harsh statements from the police officers vitiated the atmosphere forcing the CCC at one point to publicly urge the government to discourage police officials from making statements on policy matters which the CCC felt should be the prerogative of the political leadership with time the CCC was able to make much more focused statements on how specific practices needed to be changed and received encouraging responses from the peoples war.

However neither the PW nor the state government could ignore CCC not only because of its profile, but also because of its activities and statements. Both of them initially responded with a dismissive attitude. Pressed the media for comments, both police officials and the PW District committee members insinuated that the members of the CCC were at best naïve. Interestingly by early 2002, there was an appreciable change in the public mood in the state.

The suggestion that a negotiation could be possible began to surface with growing frequency in the media. This changed context demanded a change in the CCC's role too. Despite its insistence that it did not intend to act as a negotiator on behalf of either the Government or the PW, senior members of CCC were compelled to take in the role of a mediator acceptable to both sides<sup>10</sup>. This was another fresh phase which brought wherein both sides were under pressure to observe period of ceasefire.

During 2002, the PW actually observed a unilateral ceasefire twice for several weeks. The Government meanwhile kept speaking in different voices – with the Chief Minister promising positive response in some fore, and sounding uncompromising in others. The

turning point however came with the announcement of Assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh in 2004. Sensing the public mood, the Congress party put in its manifesto a promise of talks with the Maoists<sup>11</sup>, whereas an over confident Telugu Desam emphatically ruled out any negotiation with the Maoists. Thus soon after the elections were completed and Y.S. Rajashekar Reddy assumed office at the head of a Congress Government, the process for negotiations was began<sup>12</sup>. The negotiators on behalf of the Government and the PW, a group of mutually acceptable mediators comprising several of the CCC members, and a monitoring committee to ensure compliance of ceasefire norms.

Although the committee consisted of 15 members, each had their institutional responsibilities and assignments, they therefore seemed more as part timers. Sankaran took the entire onus right from its formation in 1997 till the peace talks down to the last act of documenting the whole episode. In the process, Sankaran held wider debates through a series of meetings with the political parties and larger public at Hyderabad and at other important centers in Telangana. Under the leadership of Sankaran the committee met the Chief Minister and reiterated the need to stop encounters and adhere to the Rule of law. Sankaran even addressed letters to the Chief Minister suggesting certain modalities for stopping armed action on both the sides and paving the way for an atmosphere conducive to democratic functioning. Sankaran tapped all the contacts and sources that he acquired when in formal position of state power-legal-rational authority and used for furthering the cause of peace talks. In other words for engaging the two sides for a negotiated settlement.

In a couple of instances Sankaran had to meet the Chief Minister YSR at the request of the Home Minister Jana Reddy to sort out certain issues with the Chief Minister. Sankaran successfully persuaded the Chief Minister particularly when the ban on Peoples War to be lifted to facilitate their participation in the peace dialogue. Besides this the experiment involved enormous work, in terms of negotiations, and correspondence. He personally carried almost the entire correspondence, public pronouncements and press conferences. He went to every newspaper offices to hand over the press statements and to brief the editors of the newspapers. There were instances where he had to wait in the waiting rooms for meeting the editors. Sankaran commented in a lighter vein that Newspaper offices were as good as secretariat bureaucracy. Due to this intense effort of CCC and more particularly Sankaran the

peace talks face to face between the Maoists and the government did happen. This act of Sankaran had “prepared the platform” for peace talks. Sankaran cleared all the bottlenecks and deadlocks wherever it was due. Sadly enough the peace talks ended prematurely, false encounters came back to a violence free Telangana and loss of human life again began. This upset Sankaran, he personally felt let down. He lost respect for the Indian state of which he was a part and lent great legitimacy to its power.”

The last act of Sanakran was preparing the final report about the whole episode. He strongly felt it was the moral obligation of the Committee to report the details to the people. Sankaran spent hours and hours together composing the report on the computer when the final report was prepared he gave all his savings for printing expenses. He neatly packed each report and personally posted to everyone whom he thought mattered in the country. This was his last public and democratic act with regard to peace talks.

It can therefore conclusively be said that Sankaran played a pivotal role right from the formation of the Committee to engaging both the sides down to the last act of preparing the final report of the whole episode.

### **Engaging the two sides – The State and the Maoists: The peace talks of October 2004 15-18:**

The Committee, when it started its work, did not have “talks” as its specific objective<sup>13</sup>. The effort was to interact with the people, the movement and the state in order to enlarge the Democratic space, ensure that the State conforms to the Rule of Law and the movements bind themselves to human rights. The Committee endeavoured to learn from the people and initiate public debate breaking the silence arising from fear. This witnessed an explosion of ideas and views of the people not just in newspapers and media but also in the series of meetings. From these beginnings, the possibility of what was initially termed as “coalition of armed action and a process of dialogues” emerged and in due course, crystalized into talks”<sup>14</sup>. In other words the initiative of the CCC to start with was for reduction of violence and the suggestion of peace talks are located precisely in this space. Talks in the public sphere was approbation of all the political parties at one point of time or the other, admitted that Naxalite movement had emerged from socio-economic causes. This was more

so at the time of the elections to the state Assembly in 2004, Congress party went to the extent of incorporating this line of thinking in its election manifesto. It promised the people that it would treat the movement as a socio-economic problem and address it through a dialogue, while the other major party, the TDP sought a mandate from the people to put down the movement. The people expressed their preference in no uncertain terms when they voted the Congress party into power. The long awaited peace talks finally commenced on the morning of 15<sup>th</sup> October 2004<sup>15</sup>. The team of Government was led by K. Jana Reddy, Home Minister and consisted of Koneru Ranga Rao, Minister for Municipal Administration, Dharmana Prasad Rao, Revenue Minister, Reddy Naik, Minister for Social Welfare, K. Keshava Rao, Paladugu Venkata Rao, Purushotham Rao and Karunakar Reddy, CPI (ML Peoples War was represented by Ramakrishna Sudhakar and Ganesh, CPI (ML Janashakti was represented by Amar and Riyaz. The emissaries of CPI (ML Peoples War Varavara Rao, Gaddar and G. Kalyan Rao and Chalapathi Srinivasa Rao and Chandranna of Janashakthi were also present. The team of mediators included S.R. Sankaran, K.G. Kannabiran, G. Haragopal, Potturi Venkateswara Rao, Bojja Tarakam, Sessaiah, Keshav Rao Jadhav and A.B.K. Prasad<sup>16</sup>.

### **Overall Picture of the trend of the talks:**

The first day of the talks, apart from the introductory statements and exchange of pleasantries, mainly centered on the signing of a formal ceasefire agreement. However the Government was uncomfortable with the notion of a signing a formal ceasefire agreement. After elaborate discussions, the issue was ultimately resolved through a change in the phrasing which was acceptable to both sides. The Maoists parties obstructed to Home Minister presiding over the proceedings and deliberations, there was a stalemate and it was unanimously agreed by both the sides Sankaran should preside over the deliberations which he agreed to. This can be triumph of moral authority that he acquired through his living, beliefs and dedication to the public cause.

On the eve of the talks in October 2004, the most contentious issues in the initial rounds of discussion was what was popularly known as Clause 7, in the Governments proposal which required that PW activists move around “unarmed” during the talks. As Balagopal noted, there was more rhetoric than substance to the contentions<sup>17</sup>. The

discussions on the second day related to matters specifically to its party such as minimum democratic atmosphere including withdrawal of cases against people in regard to public agitations, release of political prisoners, removal of price awards on the heads of revolutionary leaders was also sought. These were responded by the Government side stating that the “Government would stand by the democratic rights of the people”. The lifting of ban on Peoples War was cited as an evidence of the bona fides of the Government in this regard.

On the third day of the talks, the PW foregrounded issues that were related to people’s concerns such as distribution of surplus land to the landless agricultural labourers, the restoration of tribal people lands under the Regulation 1/70 and the rights on forest lands conferred on the tribal people. The mediators also referred to various issues connected with Government lands, ceiling surplus lands, endowment lands, tenancy inam lands and Boodhan lands etc. On the last day, i.e. 18<sup>th</sup> October the Government side came forward with a statement as a response to the discussions. In regard to criminal cases against the people who had taken part in agitations on public issues all those cases where there was no severe charge would be considered for withdrawal. A comprehensive land inventory would be complied. A high power committee will be set up to go into all aspects of land issues and land control. The Regulation 1/70 regarding tribal lands will be strictly enforced. The statement prepared by the Government side was gone into by the parties as well as the mediators and after detailed discussions, an agreed statement was arrived at and released. Thus the first round of talks was completed on the 18<sup>th</sup> October 2004 in a ‘cordial atmosphere’. It certainly appeared as if a reasonable conclusion for the interim had been reached and had paved the way for a second round of talks<sup>18</sup>.

### **Collapse of peace talks:**

After six months of ceasefire and all pervasive peaceful atmosphere there were series of statements and actions on the part of the Government and the party which contributed to a fast deterioration in the atmosphere, violence erupted within weeks of the talks and kept on getting from bad to worse, false encounters came back after eight to nine months of violence and loss of human life began which Samkaran was opposed to. There were also armed attacks by squads of what was now known as the CPI (Maoists. By early 2005, the Maoists issued public statement declaring loss of faith in the process and by mid-

2005, both sides had formally disengaged from the process on the 27 January 2005, the committee made a statement expressing overall climate of violence and expressed its view that the stalemate in talk's process does not mean a license for resumption of violence. The Committee called upon the Government as well as the CPI (Maoists and Jana Shakti to stop offensive actions so that people could live in peace with hope for further talks. The CCC Convener Sankaran wrote to the highest political authorities in the State and the Nation<sup>19</sup> for extending the "ceasefire" agreement as the period of six months of agreed "ceasefire" was coming to an end on the 16<sup>th</sup> December 2004, as no meaningful talks will be feasible without the extension of ceasefire. But the Government ignored the request. The CCC was never able to hold its ground as the mediator in the talks and to ensure compliance. It is crystal clear that Government had watered down the democratic process of talks. Sankaranas' moral anger is reflected thus in the below lines: "the talks in AP in 2004 had expressed the hypocrisy and heinous game plans of the Indian ruling classes when the Government refused to extend the ceasefire, commenced brutal attacks and created conditions which made second round of talks impossible under YSR's Congress regime. There bitter lessons have naturally become a deterrent for the talks anywhere in the country" (Sankaran in his report

### **Seven years of CCC's experiment – An assessment:**

From the perspective of a transformative agenda, the entire process that had led up to the talks was itself an accomplishment. More than anything, notwithstanding occasional skirmishes between the police and the Maoists, villages in North Telangana got a respite from the debilitating fear of guns for a period of one year and were able to participate in open debates. Not only from the CCC's perspective, but also from the general peace loving members of the Andhra society this was a major accomplishment in itself. Further the CCC therefore notes that the democratic space that emerged in the process of talks gained the acceptance of all sections of people as a victory of the democratic set up and of the people<sup>20</sup>. A careful reading of the CCC documents reveals that the Committee did not look upon talks as just confined to state violence, it did not engage in ideological stance taking on violence. It saw violence as a political culture that dispensed with accountability and deepened impunity, one that caused lasting psychological damage and impoverished imagination for the concerned. From this vantage point the CCC essayed a trajectory that did not depend on approval of either side for its legitimacy and took great point to insist on this autonomy.

Its agenda was about yielding democratic space to people and expanding possibilities for political assertion by ordinary people. It was as much about restoration of the rule of law as it was about urging a nature and humanized and accountable revolutionary praxis. Its conduct flowed directly from this concern. Engaging the two sides – seen to be rivals at each other the Government and the Maoist parties is not a small exercise in Arithmetic. The very fact that the Government and revolutionary parties were sitting across the table was significant and historic event. This unassumingly demonstrated that those carrying on armed struggle could also sit around a discussion table and talk to the rulers. The coming of two parties for a “dialogue” as a means for democratizing and widening democratic space is a part of political development of Indian society. This is no mean achievement of CCC collectively and Sankaran individually. The very idea of having a peace talks receiving acceptability from the “structure” is indicative of the truth that Naxalite movement is a political question and not law and order and that the Indian state has responsibility of concern towards its people. If this is at one level, at the other level talks reinforced people’s faith in democratic polity, to make room for the common people who have a greater stake in the move forward towards a just and humane society and who are willing to respond to initiatives incorporating higher and non-negotiable standards of democracy, human rights and rule of law. It is in this respect that the CCC’s activities between 1997 and 2004 have an important lesson for the present moment. The CCC was not concerned with constructing an alternative to the Maoists, but rather engaging with them. It mobilized public opinion but was careful not to take on board short term and single issue campaigns that would have trapped it in networks of development NGO’s. Instead it viewed the PW as a legitimate political actor just as it viewed the state as a legitimate institution. It sought to enable ordinary people to assert their demands for accountability and in the process came to question practices and structures in both the Government and in revolutionary movements that undermined these legitimate demands. Finally, if the CCC experiences teaches us anything it is the de-escalation of violence which can only be a means to democratization and political regeneration as one point – along a broader transformative agenda and not an end in itself. It certainly offers important lessons for further peace talks as there is a lesson to be learnt in the way the CCC defined its role throughout and the core principles and the actions it pursued.



## II

### **Manual Scavenging – Safai Karamachari Andholan (SKA and Sankaran's Contribution:**

Manual Scavenging in India is lifting and removal of human excreta manually both at private homes and in toilets maintained by public authorities. Manual scavenging is done in either of two ways. First it is through dry toilets, where human excreta is left on a stone, plate, mud or in a bucket. The manual scavenger must take the excreta to a place of disposal. Second manual scavengers clean sewage pits both in private homes and in municipalities while private pits are cleaned under cover of darkness, it is a common sight to find men opening man holes to go down and manually clean sewers<sup>21</sup>.

Who are the scavengers? They go by many names in various parts of the country whatever they are called, they belong to the bottom of the Hindu social hierarchy: They are untouchables. Indeed Manual scavenging and untouchability – caste discrimination go together – castes that consider themselves superior enjoy a wider range of choice of occupations compared to other castes. The Dalits traditionally have the least desirable occupations – cleaning, sweeping, leather work, removal of human excreta, removal of human and caste corpses, rearing of scavenger pigs and such like, while there are many castes among the Dalits, scavenging is the occupation of a few among them.

In India today, scavengers and sweepers still carry out the basic sanitary services *in* cities and towns while many are employed by local urban authorities to clean the sewer and sweep the streets, a significant number still work in their traditional occupation. This means that scavengers are still cleaning latrines by hand and carrying night soil in baskets on their heads as their occupation renders them permanently polluted according to Hindu society, scavengers are treated as untouchables, even by other untouchable castes. This discrimination means that scavengers have extremely limited job opportunities other than sanitary work, that they live in acute poverty in segregated communities, and have extremely low level of literacy and job mobility. Such socio-economic conditions for scavengers still persist despite various articles in the Indian constitution which stipulate that the state should promote the economic and educational interest of Scheduled Castes and protect them from

discrimination and exploitation since independence, the Government have lacked a sustained interest in implementing these provisions of the constitution. This has been demonstrated by the fact that several enquiries have been conducted into scavenging conditions throughout India which resulted in recommendations without substantial implementations.

Government at all levels have generally relied on rhetoric when addressing these issues, setting dates for the abolition of scavenging (the latest being 1997, but generally neglecting to discuss alternatives, and failing to provide adequate resources for the retraining of scavengers. The first committee of enquiry was from the then Government of Bombay. It appointed the scavengers living conditions enquiry committee headed by Y.N. Barve in 1949<sup>22</sup>, The Barve Committee did not ask for abolition of dry toilets, but instead for the amelioration of scavengers. The N.R. Malkani Committee<sup>23</sup> was appointed in 1957 by the Central Advisory Board of Harijan Welfare, which itself was constituted in 1956 under the Ministry of Home Affairs. The Committee, known as the scavenging conditions enquiry committee, submitted its report in 1960, largely recommending ameliorative measures again. The Central Department of Social Welfare appointed a second committee in 1965, again under the chairmanship of N.R. Malkani, to examine the abolition of the 'customary rights' of the scavengers. The I.P.D. Salappa Committee in Karnataka released its report, improvement of living and working conditions of sweepers and scavengers in 1976<sup>24</sup>. All these committees, while highlighting the pitiable conditions of the scavengers, recommended ameliorative measures, not abolition. It was Bindeshwar Pathak's Sulabh Shouchalaya Scheme which means a 'simple latrine' initiated in 1974, that heralded a slow change in the system. The turn-pit pour flush toilet was cost effective, consumed less water and had indigenous material and know-how with the turn pits working alternatively and continuously, composing on site was possible and complete desludging was pathogen-free, unlike in a single-pit toilet. Pathak was given several awards, generally feted by international agencies, and his toilet was taken up by several state governments<sup>25</sup>. In an internationally funded endeavor, Pathak set up Sulabh Shouchalaya all over India in major towns. There are now common enough sights at metropolitan bus stands, railway stations and public places. They are, however, almost completely staffed by members of the scavengers' community. Pathak envisions the "liberation of scavengers from manual scavenging but not from the caste and the profession in a new form. Therefore the Sulabh toilet mirrors the caste system. The

Sulabh invention has not been able to break the stranglehold of the caste system on occupations. The actual cleaners are, either Bhangis or Madigas who work in a shift system and are paid Rs.600 to Rs.900 per month.

Manual scavenging was banned by a formal act of Parliament in 1993. It is called the employment of Manual scavengers and construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition Act using or maintaining dry toilets is illegal and liable for criminal punishment along with a time. However official statistics released by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Justice and Empowerment, Government of India for 2002-2003 reveal that there are 6.76 lakh manual scavengers in the country spread over twenty one states and union territories working at 96 lakh dry latrines<sup>26</sup>.

In Andhra Pradesh alone, there are between two to three lakh dry latrines, and local authorities actively maintain and support them<sup>27</sup>.

### **Birth of Safai Karamachari Andholan (SKA and Sankaran's Contribution:**

The SKA, in its own words, was born out of the anguish and the anger of a few members from within the community. It was started in 1996 in Vijayawada by a few human rights activists with an objective to liberate and rehabilitate manual scavengers from their caste-based hereditary and inhuman occupation. The three people intimately connected with it since inception are Bejawada Wilson, S.R. Sankaran and Paul Diwakar (currently a senior leader of the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR based in Hyderabad). Being familiar with Sankaran's commitment, a retired Civil Servant who has worked to bend the administration to the needs of the Dalits, was approached to be the Convener of the SKA. Sankaran readily agreed to be so and took the challenge quite seriously. His intervention at all levels became quite decisive. Sankaran was a guide and a mentor to the Safai Karamachari Andholan, he brought his knowledge and expertise to the campaign. His moral authority carried momentum and had wide approbation among the Dalits and well-wishers of the "Andholan". He drafted countless petitions and memoranda to District Collectors, Gram Panchayat Secretaries and Municipal Commissioners drawing their attention to the provisions of the employment of manual scavengers and construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition Act, 1993 and the Andhra Pradesh mission's plan to demolish all dry latrines by December 2002.

In 2003, this remarkable national coalition for the elimination of manual scavenging called the Safai Karamachari Andholan led by Wilson and S.R. Sankaran filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court<sup>28</sup>. It described the persistence of dry latrines in various parts of the country is blatant violation of “Human Dignity”. It demanded that the court issues instructions to Governments for time bound eradication of manual scavenging and for effective rehabilitation of those freed from this despised vocation. The petition quotes the statutory National Commission for Safai Karamacharies to estimate that there are around 96 lakh dry latrines in the country. Successive reports of the commission note with regret that manual scavengers are being employed not just by private employees but also by numerous urban local bodies and most unconscionably by the military engineering services and army, public sector undertakings and the Indian Railways. More than 95 percent of the persons employed as manual scavengers are Dalits. This writ petition led to unprecedented media attention and to the mobilization of political pressure on the local administrative bodies to eliminate manual scavenging. As a petitioner, he argued that the continued use of dry latrines in various parts of the country is not only wholly illegal and unconstitutional but is also an affront to human dignity. There can be no excuse whatsoever to permit this degrading practice to continue, as it is the violation of all norms of human dignity as well as the fundamental rights enshrined in the constitution. Further the petitioners argued for an immediate liberation and demolition of the dry latrines and the full rehabilitation package, within a very short, defined frame work. Sankaran therefore in the later days became the chief motivator and organizer of this liberation movement along with Wilson. On few occasions Sankaran also rallied for public opinion against scavenging. He participated in a few of the demolition campaign and coordinated the eight member SKA state core group. Whenever and wherever the SKA expected the situation to be possibly tense, Sankaran was approached to facilitate protection from the local police station. In one of the rallies at Vijayawada in 2003-2004 Sankaran sponsored community lunch for the day. What worried Sankaran throughout was why this community should pay a cruel price of the greatest social degradation. How can they escape this social degradation to attain dignity? How can they be made to join the vast ranks of the proletariat? He strongly aspired for their social dignity and economic mobility and has been uncompromising on the total abolition of manual scavenging. Various organizations and Government Committees have called for “rehabilitation” of scavengers and “amelioration” of their conditions.

While Gandhi who was the first one to raise the issue of scavenging next to Ambedkar among the outsiders, Gandhi asked for giving the profession “nobility”. Further Gandhi glorified the task of manual scavengers comparing it to the service of a mother to her children.<sup>29</sup> Ambedkarities opposed it and vehemently exposed the paradox or absurdity of Mohan Das Gandhi. How can one feel proud of cleaning the worm filled, stench producing shits of millions every day? Instinctively closing their nostrils, filling their chests with what fresh air they can muster before entering these toilets. The victims of SKA have told how at the age of eight or nine they were introduced to this work; how for many days they could not bring, food to their lips; how the stench of shit was constantly in their nostrils; how their intestines retched; how they were constantly spitting out the shame and the indignity<sup>30</sup>. It is a sadder fact that a majority of manual scavengers are women. At the heart of Gandhian discourse was the romanticisation of the Bhangi and her work. The Bhangi, Gandhi wrote in 1936, “constitutes the foundation of all services. A Bhangi does for society what a mother does for her baby. A mother washes her baby of the dirt and insures his health even so the Bhangi protects and safeguards the health of the entire community by maintaining sanitation for it”. Mohan Das Gandhi, on the other hand, held out his charitable hand to the Dalits and attempted to help individuals among them, setting up the Harijan Sevak Sangh in 1932 (which incidentally excluded untouchables, and beginning the publication of Harijan<sup>31</sup>. By the 1930s, it had become clear that the Dalits were beginning to assert their rights under the leadership of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Ambedkar viewed Gandhi’s moves as “killing untouchables with kindness”.

Gandhi chastises the unwilling sweeper: “you should realize that you are cleaning Hindu society”. Further, Ambedkar’s call to the Dalits to give up traditionally polluting practices was countered by Gandhi who argued that scavenging work was “protective” of the sanitation of the entire society. Even while encouraging non-Dalits to take up scavenging, Gandhi was averse to those born as scavengers giving up the profession or expressing protest against the indignities they were made to suffer<sup>32</sup>.

The Dalit resentment on Gandhian idea of scavenging was, thus “I love scavenging..... I do not want to be reborn. But if I have to be reborn, I should be born an untouchable, so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings and the affronts leveled at them, in order that I may endeavor to free myself and then from that miserable condition”<sup>33</sup>. To this Ambedkarities told him “If you want to be a sweeper, you can fulfill your desire in this life.

Come on! But he never came. He was a hypocrite just fooling innocent people”<sup>34</sup>. Ambedkar’s understanding struck at the root of the Gandhian premise.

Under Hinduism scavenging was not a matter of choice, it was a matter of force. What does Gandhism do? It seeks to perpetuate their system by praising scavengers as the noblest service to society! What is the use of telling the scavenger that even a Brahmin is prepared to do scavenging when it is clear that according to Hindu Shastras and Hindu notions even if a Brahmin did scavenging he would never be subject to the disabilities of one who is a born scavenger? For in India a man is not a scavenger because of his work, he is a scavenger because of his birth irrespective of the question whether he does scavenging or not<sup>35</sup>. In the days that followed the views of Ambedkar prevailed on the scavenging castes; as they did on a large section of other Dalits, it was likely that manual scavenging would have had an early demise in India only if Gandhi was not rhetorical and too speechy about the issue.

Sankaran who staked his good will, time and energy for peace talks was perhaps, the right ethical actor to be drawn into this challenging movement. Sankaran was approached by Wilson the leader of the Safai Karamachari Andholan. Wilson quotes that the “SKA was strengthened and supported by the active involvement of S.R. Sankaran, who was vitally connected with the SKA, an organic linkage I am proud to acknowledge”<sup>36</sup>. In this struggle Sankaran campaigned tirelessly and moved much ahead of Gandhi and struck the chord on the Ambedkarian premise of “social justice and an egalitarian society

Through law Sankaran wanted to end forever this humiliating tradition. His focus was on human dignity and not merely on issues of sanitation. While Gandhi accepted this age-old practice of human degradation without outrage, Gandhi did not look at this as human dignity that is guaranteed to all citizens. In the writ petition to the Supreme Court “one of the demands of Sankaran was for a more stringent law, and the ending of this practice with a sound rehabilitation package.” Sankaran strongly believed that this practice was inconsistent with the right to live with dignity and a stigma and a blot on society. He recognized the historical injustice and indignity caused to people forced for generations to perform this degrading work. It further records that they have waited for too long for the fulfillment of the promises of India’s constitution of equal citizenship. They should wait no longer. Sankaran received lavish atonement from within and outside, for the investment that he made for human dignity of the sanitary workers. Finally a law of enormous social significance

prohibiting and punishing manual scavenging was passed by the Parliament on September 7, 2013 a central law binding on all the states.

### **Summing up:**

Sankara superannuated with sense of purpose unlike many officers, who turn cynical struggling in a hostile working atmosphere today. Two of his important post-retirement activities are indicative of his willingness to take up the most difficult of challenges. The formation of Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC) to negotiate for democratic space for ordinary citizens and initiate a serious debate relating to 'war' between the Maoists and the Government of Andhra Pradesh. He believed strongly that anyone (even a revolutionary group who hold a gun, had to be accountable and responsible to the people. He also believed in the constitutional responsibility of the state to hold to its obligations no matter what the provocation is. The Committee assigned to itself the task of bringing peoples aspirations and the right to live with dignity on to the agenda of the Naxalite movements and governments. The buoyancy with which he worked towards negotiating for peace is indeed remarkable. He spent eight long years in engaging the state and the Maoists simultaneously on a dialogue table for a broader political debate, making state believe and accept that Naxal movement was a "political Question" and they did represent the aspirations of the poor and deprived. It was clear that it was Sankaran's concern, clarity of purpose and moral credibility that he enjoyed with the state and armed struggle that made the experiment possible. Even if it remains an experiment for the moment, interestingly it has no withering assessment from a wide cross section of civil society who believed in peace. This therefore is no mean an achievement of CCC collectively and Sankaran individually.

The legendary "Brahmin bureaucrats" contribution to Safai Karamachari Andholan received accolades both from insiders and outsiders. Wilson the founder of Safai Karamchari Andholan says: "I found a friend, guide, and philosopher in Sankaran, who gave impetus to the movement". He added "Sankaran commanded utmost respect at all levels due to clarity of purpose and human concern which he demonstrated in "Authority" and outside". Thus the momentum of moral power that he demonstrated when in service was carried with further acceleration in the absence of formal authority or power. As the purpose was getting clearer and clearer, he enjoyed the trust of the movements, be it Maoist movements, Dalit

movements, tribal movements. The Safai Karamachari Andolan was the latest and the last as he allied himself with the most marginalized and demanded for states intervention in a determined activist style. While Gandhi suffered from this trust of the Dalits and that his “scavenging project” remained an enigma which was set aside with disapprobation. Sankaran took up this unfinished task of emancipating the human group which was caught in this wretched and undignified work.

**Note:**

Most of the comments, observations were drawn from the long drawn discussions with the members of the CCC, its Convener S.R. Sankaran and prominent members of the committee such as Prof. Haragopal, Prof. D. Narasimha Reddy members of the civil society.

The researcher also met CPI (Maoist) leaders at Shri Potturi Venkateswara Rao’s house when they had come for the peace talks, on the last day of the talks 18<sup>th</sup> October 2004. Elaborate discussions were held regarding the hope of second round of talks, assessing the committees work.

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3. Subsequently, that year, Balagopal left the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee and formed the Andhra Pradesh Human Right Forum.
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## **Chapter - 6**

### **Human and Moral concerns: Sankarans' Reflections**

In this chapter an attempt is made to capture Sankaran's concerns on various issues. Its purpose is to locate this sensitive administrator's argument and concerns on various issues as reflected in his writings is important to see how his thoughts, as reflected in his writings. Sankaran apart from his action did put some of his thoughts was into action. Sankaran did put some of his thoughts in the articles and speeches that he delivered. A few of the important one's relevant to the study have been covered for this purpose. These articles deal with issues; issues relating to poverty and the poor, child labour, emancipation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Chakmas and Administrative response towards the poor. The concerns human and moral are running thread through all his writings.

#### **I**

##### **Poverty and the poor:**

In an article on "Rural Poor and Public Action"<sup>1</sup> (1994) he deliberated on some of the issues of public action in relation the poor people, particularly, the rural people and more specifically agricultural labourers and among them the child labour, the migrant labour and the bonded labour. He maintains that rural poverty is co-related to land ownership and control over land. More than half of the rural poor are landless agricultural labourers lacking command over land, access to assets, income and credit, having only their labour power to sell with their fortunes being intrinsically linked to the agricultural labour market conditions. Caste is a double burden on the socially underprivileged sections of the poor. The largest occupational category and the largest groups among the rural poor are the marginalized agricultural labourers depending on uncertain employment and fluctuating swages. Among the agricultural labourers, child labour is one of the most exploited, despite the constitutional recognition of the child to be in school and not in workplace. Sankaran feels that public policy and action is retarded due to the inability, reluctance and unwillingness to perceive child labour as illegitimate in a modern society. Attributing lack of employment opportunity in rural areas as reason for migration, the paper calls for appropriate state and public action for creation of local employment opportunities. In the light of constitutional directions and

the precedent set by Maharashtra state, employment for the rural poor should form a part of the state policy.

The author himself performing the Herculean task of releasing and rehabilitating the bonded labours in the state of Andhra Pradesh, holds that extreme poverty, unemployment and underemployment, inequitable distribution of land and other assets, low wages, indebtedness and similar factors give rise to bonded labour representing an unequal exchange system, virtual absence of bargaining power and unequal relationship between the creditor and the debtor. Weak legislations, inadequate intervention of state agencies and public action are causes for and continuation of bondage. Being unorganized with weak bargaining power they are denied even the minimum wages, the denial of which by itself is evidence of existence of forced labour. Despite the constitutional commitment there is yet a very large number of bonded labourers, child labour and migrant labour precisely because of the disjunction of constitutional values and the hierarchical and the feudal values which continue to govern the society giving rise to contradicting and conflicting policies and actions.

He also maintained that the structural adjustment policy is diminishing state's role in development process and this policy being market friendly and market being no place for equity, they are admittedly poor unfriendly". The author claims that public policy is not a question of state intervention alone, the domain of public action including public non-state actors and demand for action on the part of the state. He recognizes that "Public, however, is not a homogeneous entity and, the state is not a neutral arena for social action".

Sankaran in his paper "Planning for the poor: An Indian Experience"<sup>2</sup> (1997) details the approach, strategies and instruments adopted in the successive five year plans to eliminate poverty which is the basic goal of planning in India-asserted and repeatedly reassessed. His argument is based on the strategies for elimination of poverty-strategies being economic growth, redistribution, targeted programmes and provisions of basic needs. The author contends that economic growth is necessary factor in poverty alleviation programmes, but not sufficient. In the wake of new economic policy and shift in measures to accelerate economic growth, growth as a strategy of direct attack on poverty will not yield the desired results especially in a society characterized by inequalities in ownership of assets and access to

resources. Growth and poverty alleviation should go hand in hand, programmes of poverty alleviation should thus be regarded as supplementing and strengthening and not substituting the overall growth which itself should generate adequate productive assets and skills and income for the poor. Indian experience shows that, growth has been uneven over time space and sections of the society, there are also aspects of growth which are displacing and impoverishing the poor. Given the strategic role of economic growth in poverty eradication macroeconomic policy should look into policies with great care and see the steps which are relevant to the poor such as employment, food prices, land tenure, health and education. The choice of macroeconomic policies and poverty alleviation programmes should be mutually reinforcing. He laments that “Redistribution has been attempted primarily through land reforms with very limited success” and strongly feels that Vigorous implementation of land reform measures can bring about a substantial change in the rural scene in favour of the poor. Availability of land at the command of the poor improves the chances of success of the poverty alleviation schemes. He proposes that the strategy of direct assault on poverty through targeted programmes launched under the banner of poverty alleviation programmes, frequently redesigned and renamed have not altered the poverty map. The provision of basic needs have been found to be insufficient and inadequate despite all the shortcomings in the implementation of the programmes. There has been some definite diminution in the intensity of deprivation suffered by the poor.

Referring to the Market Oriented Philosophy he maintains, ‘poor are kept outside the market itself. Equity is not the concern of market led growth and market mechanized prices. Despite of liberalization or structural adjustment he argues poverty alleviation and policy should be given highest priority, the planners and policy makers have to look within and wage an intensive campaign against poverty and all its manifestations including child labour, bonded labour, illiteracy and ill-health. He asserts that when forty percent of them are still in abject poverty no plan can have any overriding objective other than the elimination of poverty’. The process will have to be strengthened by appropriate support mechanisms including widening opportunities, larger command over resources, enabling government policies, protection of rights of the poor as well as decentralization.

Sankaran has dealt in minute detail on the “Minimum wage legislation in India”<sup>3</sup> (1998 while doing so he is highly critical of the existing legislation for its weak design and structure and ineffective implementation of the provisions. Part of the weak design and structure is attributed to the provision that minimum wage is to be prescribed at the discretion of the authorities, absence of criteria for framing minimum wage rates, gender based discrimination among adults, adolescents and children, power to grant exemptions from the operation of the act, inadequate sanctions and cumbersome procedure for penalties, with prosecutions rendered very difficult. To put its implementations in tune with constitutional objectives and obligations he calls for an imperative need to have a statutory basis for minimum wage determination which should be scientific and has revisability built into the structure, linked with price index or poverty line which will meet not only socioeconomic requirements but also legal requirements. The right to minimum wage being a fundamental right and that legislation on minimum wages is a beneficial social legislation aimed to improve the conditions of labour particularly the unorganized labour ensuring social justice with the ultimate objective of securing equality. Using legal frame work, he has shown how the apex court in Sanjit Roy vs. Government of Rajasthan and peoples union for democracy vs. Union of India (Asiad case holds that non-payment of minimum wages as violation of article 29 of the Indian constitutions and hence forced labour.

Sankaran traces inequitable distribution of land (with increasing instances of land being taken away by the government and other assets, low wages, indebtedness, virtual absence of bargaining power and lack of organization, depressed minimum wages, inadequate intervention of state agencies and public action, and provision of basic needs, weak legislations, ineffective implementation, unemployment and under employment are all causes of poverty and its manifestations like bonded labour, migrant labour and child labour could be widely noticed in rural India.

Sankaran’s strategies to combat poverty includes, employment guarantee for the rural poor, social mobilization and group formation and strong organizational set up by the poor, rigourous implementation of land reforms, suitable development administrative structure and sensitive administrative system. For effective poverty alleviation it is necessary that there is a combination of effective state intervention from above and social initiative and mass mobilization from below, decentralization and devolution to local bodies. Emphasizing on the

strategic role of economic growth in poverty eradication programme, Sankaran suggests that macroeconomic policy should look into with great care at policies which are relevant to the poor, such as employment, food provisions, land tenure, health and education. The choice of macroeconomic policies for poverty alleviation programme he retreats should mutually be reinforcing. For the success of poverty alleviation programme, he argues for the need to build entitlements in favour of the poor, ensuring proper wages, public provisions regarding land, entitlements, health care, public distribution, water supply, supportive credit and school meals. He argues that poverty alleviation should be viewed in the wider perspective of socio economic transformation and not as mere financial transfer. Direct and effective people's participation in the decisions that affect their lives and prospects is necessary. Intensive planning for the poor and not indicative planning for the affluent. As, he argues is the need of the hour.

Sankaran writing on **“Police reforms: Need to Review- the power to arrest”** has brought in interesting issues and has pointed out some measures to avoid punishments or arrest of **“victimless crimes”**<sup>4</sup>. A news item in the Hindu of Hyderabad dated October 14 under the title “lock up death at Bandi Athmakur alleged was of great concern to Sankaran due to the human tragedy of a dalit youth who has lost his life for nothing more than an act of playing cards with friends. The two constables attached to Bandi Atmakur police station picked up the Dalit boy from his house at Kottala, a Scheduled Caste locality of the town accusing him of indulging in gambling. However, he had not returned home since then. The Inspector and Sub-Inspector who were the station house officers said the “arrested was let off on the same day after securing personal bonds and asked to be prepared for appearing before the court”. However, the parents alleged that the two constables had beaten their son to death.

Analyzing the implications of the above news report closely, Sankaran in his article on “Police Reforms: Need to review the power to arrest” states that, the place where the incident occurred was just a big village which in the earlier days was a firka headquarters. It is quite possible that some Scheduled Caste youths were playing cards with some money at stake. It is most unlikely that they were professionals running a gambling den, nor could the money at stake be very large. Nevertheless, it was an offence under the law of the land. The

police constable impelled by the call of their legal duties, tried to enforce the majesty of the law by arresting them. Since the dead body was found near the police station, the parents and local people said the youth was tortured by police to death. The constables were just transferred not even suspended and the rest is for enquiry.

Referring to the criminal justice system in India Sankaran says “the police are empowered under every conceivable laws, most of which are not known to people or understood by the police themselves. But ignorance of law is no excuse, he adds. He further traces that it is laws that create crimes and if more of human conduct is categorized as criminal even an ideals criminal justice, system cannot prevent the occurrence of more crimes. Since many laws are criminogenic and lead to furthering crimes by labelling a person as a criminal, which is particularly true of many social laws which create the category of what are termed as “ victimless crimes” such as gambling, drinking liquor etc. where there is normally no aggrieved parties to complain. He strongly contends that “criminal laws should be reviewed with the object of decriminalizing many aspects of human behavior”. In other words Sankaran as a humane administrator takes a very comprehensive view; a view even from purely from a police angle, decriminalization of “victimless offences” like gambling is necessary to reduce their workload and to prevent illegal actions and corruption in police. “One of the major reasons for abuse of authority and excesses by the police Sankaran argues is the enormous power they wield over life and liberty of which the power to arrest is the most important in this category. Therefore there is a need for reducing the scope for several attendant malpractices. In this regard a rethinking on decriminalization, review of laws and police intervention is particularly necessary in the context of police reforms to avoid tragic incidents like the one referred at the beginning of this review, otherwise they are bound to recur, with most of the victims being the poor and Dalits. This refreshing analysis of administrator who was a part of this system for more than three decades.

## **II**

### **Child Labour:**

Child labour the most exploited sections of the labour force is another overriding concern of this sensitive administrator. In the article “Child Labour – A need for a



sympathetic understanding”<sup>5</sup> (1997 itself envelops the sensitive assimilation of the wild syndrome child labour. Giving an empathetic and humane dimension to child labour the paper argues that child labour cannot be termed as harsh reality or necessary evil, but it is essential to recognize that child labour is morally wrong, socially unjust and there is no distinction between exploitative and non-exploitative child labour or hazardous or non-hazardous employment as far as children are concerned. His central proposition is that child labour by itself represents an exploitative system. The economics of which is not the economic need or poverty of parents, but the economics of the employer for whom it earns higher output, greater control and larger profits. Admitting poverty and child labour are closely interrelated, and recognizing the need to reduce poverty, he maintains that “child labour should not be perceived as destiny from which it is impossible to escape except through elimination of poverty”. When child labour and schooling are taken together there is no direct co-relation between dropout rates and poverty lines beyond a point. School dropouts and child labour are a cause and not a consequence. Child labour perpetuates poverty, it creates poverty and poverty creates it. Refuting the nimble figure theory he holds the converse view that a child cannot do many things that an adult can. While the constitution stands for the abolition of child labour, the efforts and approach have been more in the nature of recognizing and regularizing rather than de-recognizing and elimination of child labour. Education as a mandate by the constitution which cannot co-exist with the exploitation of children by putting them to work. Sankaran asserts that, besides poverty, “lack of commitment of the state and the society to universal primary education, and the incrementally reformist position of regulating child labour rather than derecognizing and eliminating it altogether accounts for gravity of the problem. He suggests that “free and compulsory education should form a key factor in the elimination of child labour, the state and society should stand committed to universal primary education, to the provision of the constitution and Rights of the child (11 December 1992”. “Since education has become a part of the problem it has to be reborn as a part of the solution”. Besides insisting on special effort to orient the anti-poverty schemes towards the objective of elimination of child labour, Sankaran has laid stress on political commitment, changes in policy perceptions and concerted public action.

### III

#### **Development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes:**

The socio-economic development of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, who constitute a very large segment of the poor sections of the Indian society, constituting the main bedrock on which the society and economy rests is of chief concern to Sankaran who in his three and a half decades of civil service was dedicated to the development of these communities. In his article on “Development of Scheduled Caste in Andhra Pradesh”<sup>6</sup> (1998).

Malas and Madigas in Andhra Pradesh he maintains are victims of oppression, untouchability, social prejudices, discrimination and indignity. Their common suffering is indeed their common bond. Both these communities are subjected to the social evils of sexual exploitation and atrocities. Atrocities and indignities against the Scheduled Caste do not distinguish between Malas and Madigas. If in Karamchedu Madigas were the victims, Malas were the victims in Chundur incident. Sankaran observes that, it remains an undisputed fact that the upper caste communities did practice social and economic oppression, segregation and imposed various disabilities, preventing them from access to schools, temples drinking water, public places and offices, but it cannot be the case that the Malas oppressed the Madigas, even if that there was same social disabilities between them due to traditional occupation associated with each community, almost all Malas and Madigas work mostly as agricultural labourers in rural areas often ending as bonded labours.”

Focusing on the emerging issues of demand to break down the total reservation available for the Scheduled Caste as a whole into proportionate allotment to different groups among the Scheduled Castes particularly between Malas and Madigas, Sankaran argues that “Madigas in Andhra Pradesh are somewhat backward and are lagging behind compared to Malas in terms of space occupied in public service, higher education and other socio-economic indicators, which does not imply that they were not given any benefit nor is that Malas have usurped or grabbed the position or deprived the Madigas, but due to large number of historical reasons such as comparative faster growth of the coastal Andhra, better educational opportunities, spread effect of education and first generation employment, missionary activities and a host of other factors.” The population of Malas and Madigas

being almost equal vacancies reserved for the Scheduled Caste in public employment and the seats in higher education have been availed broadly in the ratio of 64:36, the present situation is one of imbalance and needs appropriate correction.” He thought “a vailment of whatever job opportunities that arise in proportion to the population may not place anyone at a disadvantage and may serve to correct the imbalance.” Equitable sharing of jobs or seats can become a part of the process of strengthening the unity and solidarity. He pleaded that both the communities should recognize the need for securing equality among themselves and strive for equality but with liberalization and the shrinking of public sector, not many job opportunities in the public sector are likely to emerge in future”. He adds that “categorization orders if upheld by the courts does not apply at the central level where most of the jobs are arising from the different levels of development of the two communities he adds at a particular historical moment and efforts to reduce the differentials and to bring about equality is necessary. The non-antagonistic contradiction that has emerged can be resolved by mutual understanding. He therefore, strongly urged and earnestly pleaded with both Malas and Madigas for the return to amity and not allow the acrimony to spread particularly to the villages irrespective of the decision of the Supreme Court, he further added “the responsibility for finding a solution rests with Scheduled Caste community. Any diminution in the strength and unity will have serious socio-economic and political consequences. Nothing stands in reviving the spirit of solidarity”.

This perspective has to be seen in his rich experience as principal secretary social welfare department, government of Andhra Pradesh in 1985 when atrocities against the Scheduled Castes took place at Karamchedu where the entire community stood united.

Sankaran in his paper “Emancipation of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (1997)”<sup>7</sup>, examines their conditions (who are generally considered outcastes and outsiders in the socio-economic system and constitutional safeguards, variety of special legislation and constitutional amendments to secure equality and human dignity, policy measures and welfare programmes for their all-round development to establish an egalitarian social order with equity for all sections of the society, free from any form of discrimination whatsoever, the cherished goal of our nation enshrined in the constitution, he has argued that, “despite many shortcomings there has been a significant progress in their socio-economic conditions.”

There is yet a vast ground to be traversed. He adds “Development of these communities should be viewed not only in absolute terms but also in relation to the development of the rest of the society. The progress in relative terms requires that there is not only a positive change in their socio-economic situation but that the rate of change is fast enough to ensure that the disparity is progressively minimized and ultimately eliminated altogether. The development of these communities is thus a part of the quest for equality and social justice, the objectives enshrined in the constitution and pursued since independence”.

#### IV

##### **Chakmas:**

Sankaran’s concerns are not only localized but globalized. This is reflected in his article on “Chakmas – The Struggle for human rights in Indian sub-continent (1998”<sup>8</sup>. This paper accounts for the suffering and gross human rights violation of Chakmas. He traces the genesis of the problem to the partition of India, socio-economic and political development of Pakistan regime and the emergence of Bangladesh”, He points out that Chakmas represent a group of people territorially and psychologically uprooted, displaced and deprived of their natural habitats ,traditional vocations, life styles and life support systems. Insecure in their own homeland of Chittagang hill tracts, unwanted in Arunachal Pradesh, unwelcome in Mizoram, refugees in Tripura, the chakmas face an uncertain future dispersed, displaced and scattered in the north eastern Indian subcontinent characterizing their situation as one of uprootedness and withering”.

The feelings of Sankaran for these unfortunate people are strikingly revealing.

Sankaran attributes the problems of religious, linguistic and ethnic minorities like chakmas to the ruling groups approach to national building, who assume nation state as the highest form of organization and a means for Nation-building. While strengthening national identities and loyalties they oppose the sub-national identities assuming the two to be incompatible. State building is perceived as the primary instrument of nation building and is often associated with the centralized bureaucracy. In the name of progress and nation building they justify the forcible integration of these sub-national ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural groups into Nation State. He adds unwillingness of these groups is not only treated as but subjected to atrocities and oppression including the denial of identity,

systematic policy of immigration of majority groups settlers at the cost of local people, the denial of a place of one's own resulting in forced out migration from the area, involuntary migration to the neighboring countries, cultural and religious oppression in its many manifestations and, in its starkest form of physical terror and extinction". This analysis reflects his intellectual height and deep humanistic concerns.

The paper suggests that Nation State can survive only on a common identity and certain shared values. The dominant majority should be ready and willing to create real conditions to develop the feeling of human identity within the nation as a whole and to participate in the shared value system. Justifying the December 1997 agreement, he proclaims "it as a bold initiative on the part of Prime Minister Shaik Hasina and the leaders of Chittagong hill tracts paving the way for a bright future for the nation state of Bangladesh".

## V

### **Administrative responses to the issues relating the poor:**

The author himself a sensitive administrator in his three and a half decades of administrative service was closely associated with the welfare of the poor, hence has argued for adequate administrative response as crucial factor in securing basic rights of the poor. Besides being a part of the state until recently, he has lamented on the state and its agencies for its repressive nature.

In the course of his analysis on the "Repressive State or Responsive State (1997)"<sup>9</sup>. Sankaran, attempts a critical or a self- critical analysis of the role of state and its agencies in relation to human rights. He observes that "state and its agencies are the foremost violators of Human Rights (barring exceptions". He adds "the struggle of human rights is mostly against the state and its agencies". He recognizes that "the state is repressive as it represents the dominant interests of the ruling class." It is a constitutional mandate on the state and its agencies to act affirmatively in the socio-economic rights and a number of positive human rights particularly in favour of the poor, disadvantaged and underprivileged. H asserts Minimum adherence to the constitution and rule of law will itself enhance the Human Rights to a significant extent. For people like Sanakran "who entered the portals of government in early fifties assumed government as noble and its services virtuous as it is identified with

people. The repressive nature of the state and its agencies in relation to the poor, downtrodden and the underprivileged are shown with practical instances. When some of them including Sankaran, worked as sub-divisional magistrate or district magistrate decades ago, they regularly investigated into the case of illegal detention or torture or ill-treatment of any incidence in police custody, deaths in police custody or at the hands of the police or any public servants was taken serious note of at every level of administration in striking contrast to the present situation to approach the High Court or even the Supreme Court to get an illegal detention or custodial death investigated. Besides police force being in the prominence as primary violators of human rights, pathetically all agencies of the state stand in a similar situation. In this context, he recalls an instance while he was working as chief secretary of Tripura state, “the tribal people met him in a village where he was staying and requested him to protect them from the revenue department, police and forest department which in effect meant saving them from the government itself”. It is a very sad commentary on bureaucracy when in 1986 Madhya Pradesh High Court was called upon to decide whether the tribals of Chainpura (a villa in M.P. could lawfully collect the droppings (dung from their own cattle which were allowed to graze in the reserved forests under a licence granted by the government. The government of Madhya Pradesh argued before the court that the excreta were state property under section 2 (4 (b of the Indian Forest Act. It was left to the Madhya Pradesh High Court to pronounce that the dung excreted by the cattle of the licensed graziers is not minor forest produce nor are the grazers to be deprived of their natural rights to the dung. Since the state and its agencies are themselves the guardians of the interest and safeguards enshrined in the law, guarding the guardians, poses peculiarly problematic issue both in principle and practice in a democratic society. Expressing the need for a sensitive bureaucracy who can prevent injustice to the poor in the society and in various arenas of administration such as public offices or police stations and to protect and enhance the human rights particularly of the Dalits, the women and the poor. As an instance to show how a sensitive administration could go to the support of the poor based on the law and rules, even in the face of the unhelpful political government; atrocities on Scheduled Castes families (July 1985 in Karamchedu village of Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh is cited.

While holding that it is difficult to do away with bureaucracy, he maintains that “it is necessary to make it more responsive and accountable in protecting and promoting human

rights, by altering the adverse relationship between the people and the bureaucracy, humanizing the bureaucracy through sensitive institutions, codifying of human rights law, closer involvement of non-governmental organizations and activists. Ultimate of all is growing people movements”.

Speaking on “Administration and the Poor (1996)”<sup>10</sup> at Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, he focused on some of the aspects of administration in relation to the poor. Beginning with the Preamble to the Constitution, he has stated that the constitution is an instrument largely weighed in favour of the weaker sections of Indian society. Public administrators have a special responsibility to the poor who constitute a majority of the Indian population. Civil servants he observes, “Have to carry out the tasks in terms of the constitution mandate and the legal frame work. Being experienced and competent permanent officials in diverse fields, they constitute an elite corps with a vast authority vested in them for being exercised in public interests to achieve public policy objectives”. He has not only laid emphasis on the need for a compassionate, impartial, fearless civil servants who can protect, support and be a source of strength to the poor in a society that is fraught with socio-economic irregularities, but that public functionaries should use laws as legal weapons in favour of the poor enhancing the space for them. For all poor oriented programmes and policies particularly in the poverty alleviation programmes there is the need for an efficient and imaginative administrative machinery which can ensure that the benefits reach the poor. The poor being subjected to suffering and injustice both in the hands of the rich and administration, there is a need for a sensitive administrator who can prevent injustice to them in society and in various arenas of administration like public offices and police stations. The paper has shown eloquently how in various issues like the minimum wage legislation, land reforms, bonded labour abolition, child labour (regulation and protection, programmes for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the administrative agencies at the policy making and implementation have not carried out their functions in an effective manner as they lack concern for the problems of the poor and an aversion for social programmes for the poor. Though poverty alleviation programmes have expanded exponentially in recent years with phenomenal increase in the allocation of resources and manpower, there has been a sharp decline in the competence with which unresponsive to or even unaware of the aspirations of the poor or conditions that sustain their poverty.

Giving an ethical touch to civil service the paper suggests that civil service should be guided by a code of ethics and become an ethical mission motivated by a value system and tradition of humanism. It is essential that the administration develops into a confident and professional group with values and attitudes appropriate to the building of a just and humane society.

The paper on “Organizational and administrative inputs for poverty alleviation programme (1998”<sup>11</sup> holds that for effective alleviation programme there is a need for strong organizational set up, suitable development administrative structure and sensitive administrative system while apprising the decentralization of development administration, deconcentration of bureaucratic powers and the role of decentralized political and elective institutions at the village and municipal levels in development functions, the author does not undermine or underestimate the role of government machinery for the actual implementation of the programmes. In fact he emphasizes the need for sensitive, responsive, competent and motivated administrative personnel who would form a single most important factor not only in translating the policies into action but as a source of great strength to the poor. Strong organizations of the poor and the vulnerable will not only help the poor to assert the right to the resources intended for them but can act as a vehicle for enhancing the general capacity of poor for self-improvement. Social mobilization and group formation can create solidarity among the poor who are otherwise often inarticulate and struggling hard merely to survive. In addition to correct identification of the poor access to information is indispensable for poverty alleviation. It is the absence or the denial of information or lack of transparency that leads to absence of people’s participation and therefore misuse of resources through abuse of power. For the successful implementation of poverty alleviation it is necessary that there is a combination of effective state intervention from above and social initiative and mass mobilization from below in the perspective in which the poor are themselves active participants, making their own future irrespective of liberalization or structural reforms, poverty alleviation has to be the goal and should be given the highest priority in the developmental agenda. The process will have to be strengthened by appropriate support mechanism, including widening opportunities, larger command over resources, enabling government policies, decentralization and devolution to local bodies, protection of the rights of the poor including the right to work and the right to participate in decisions that affect their



lives, the organization of the poor and the creation of the sensitive administrative system for the programmes.

Writing on the **Rebirth of National advisory Council (2010 Sankaran while complimenting the chairperson Sonia Gandhi for her commendable contribution in the area of NREGA and RTI he appeals to Sonia Gandhi that her effective intervention will be able to secure a better quality of life for the poor.**<sup>12</sup>

Tracing the origin of NAC which dates back to the time when the UPA led by the Congress Party formed the Government at the Centre in May 2004 after the general elections. A National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP) was drawn up jointly by all the constituents of the UPA for implementation. The NCMP was considered as a starting point that highlighted the main priorities, policies and programmes of the UPA and consisted of a large number of initiatives arranged under different heads – agriculture, education, health, food and nutrition security, panchayati raj, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, minorities, infrastructure, Water resources, Centre State relations, Jammu and Kashmir, North-East administrative reforms, industry, labour, public sector, economic reforms, defence, internal security, energy security, foreign policy and even more areas.

It was in the context of this NCMP that the NAC was constituted. The objective of NAC was to “oversee the implementation of the CMP of the government to provide inputs for the formulation of policy by the government and to provide support to the government in its legislative business” (Government of India Cabinet Secretariat Order No.631/i/2004-cab dated 31 May 2004). What is interesting is unlike the planning commission, which is headed by the Prime Minister and its deputy chairman, a non-party individual, the NAC is headed by a Chairperson - with the rank and status of a Cabinet Minister and members being drawn from among non-party civil society activists or experts – though all of them have been handpicked by Sonia Gandhi and Prime Minister. Sonia Gandhi was appointed as the chairperson of the NAC early in June 2004. The members were appointed initially for a period of one year and this period was extended from time to time up to 31 March 2008. However, in March 2006 Sonia Gandhi resigned from the post of the NAC Chairmanship as it was announced to holding an office of profit. The NAC itself ceased to exist after 31 March 2008. In any event, with the resignation of Sonia Gandhi in 2006, “the NAC lost its

importance and effectiveness even within two years of its formation.” Writing on the Rebirth of the National Advisory Council (of 2010 Sankaran strongly feels that – whatever little piece of legislations that came out in the first innings of the NAC such as the NREGA which brought in a non-negotiable legal right with many unique features. Likewise, the national RTI was again unique and an extraordinarily powerful piece of legislation. The fact that the NAC headed by Sonia Gandhi (who was also the chairperson of UPA sponsored and pursued these legislations was the crucial factor that made a difference to the approach and attitude of the government.” He further adds that there can be little doubt that but for the intervention of the NAC headed by Sonia Gandhi, these two enactments would not have come about at all and in any case, certainly not in the form and content in which they were enacted. With the rebirth of NAC in 2010 and Sonia Gandhi being the chairperson once again Sankaran appeals to the NAC Chairperson Sonia Gandhi that “the strength of the NAC lies in the fact that it is headed by Sonia Gandhi who wields unquestioned authority and influence on the entire government” that advice tendered by the NAC will not be considered as just a piece of advice but almost as a direction to the government.

The “born again” NAC has therefore to fulfill the high expectations that in areas of social concern identified by the Council such as food and nutrition security, forest rights of the poor, elimination of manual scavenging, eradication of untouchability or atrocities against Dalits, its effective intervention will be able to secure a better quality of life for the people.

### **Summing Up:**

Over the length and breadth of his works and writings Sankaran has repeatedly argued in favour of the poor, the common man, and the vulnerable sections the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and Children. Weak legislations, ineffective implementation, inequitable distribution of land and other assets, deprivations minimum wages, non-intervention of state agencies and public action are all, he argues causes of poverty and its manifestations like bonded labour, migrant labour and child labour. Lack of commitment by the state and society to universal primary education and the incremental reformist position of regulating rather than de-recognizing and eliminating them all together, are contributing to the existence of child labour.

The socio-economic development of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes who constitute the largest segment living below the poverty line is viewed not only in absolute terms but also in relation to the development of the rest of the society.

The ruling class approach to nation-building assumes that nation state as the highest form of organization and means for nation-building are the causes for the gross violation of the human rights. This is how he traces the crisis of chakmas.

Sankaran has suggested a range of practical measures to combat these struggles in daily life and to achieve the objectives set by the constitution. These include strengthening the official machinery, streamlining and rigorously implementing existing legislations, formulating new policies and seeking the active participation of the community.

The state and its agencies are not only responsive to the issues relating to the poor, but are repressive as they represent the interest of the ruling class. In the epoch of market oriented philosophy, state and its agencies are urged to adhere to the constitutional obligations and secure basic human rights to the oppressed sections of the society. Since market-led growth cannot eradicate poverty, public action and state intervention are viewed as indispensable in his own reformative framework.

The repressive nature of bureaucracy can be made more responsive and accountable in protecting and promoting Human Rights by closer involvement of the non-governmental organizations and genuine peoples movement. The continuous affirmation of the need for responsive mass movement is considered of tremendous significance.

Sankaran: thinking, living and writing and actions all go together, one reinforcing the other. His advice to the young civil servants that they should be guided by the code of ethos and become an ethical mission motivated by a value system and tradition of humanism sums up what Sankaran thought and stood for. While administration and administrators are guided and governed by legal-rational authority, it is this ethical dimension that made Sankaran distinctly different both as person and an administrator. He strongly believed which comes

out very strikingly in his writings that this moral ethical sensibilities should be harnessed for the benefit and betterment of the conditions of the poor as a part of larger process of emancipation of the poor.

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## Conclusion

Post independent India's administration certainly appeared to be an ICS tradition of administration. India has had an unremarkable administrative continuity. Perhaps, the most difficult problem was re-orientation of administrative machinery from its colonial hangover. Although Nehru was "quite sure" that no new order could be built in India as long as the spirit of the ICS pervades our administration and our public services, he felt it essential that the ICS and similar services must disappear completely. Yet, when the British left in 1940s and new Indian government took over with Nehru as Prime Minister, the British were invited to stay on. It is unbelievable were it not true that Nehru and his colleagues sought to build a new India, a more egalitarian society through the agency of those who had been the trained servants of imperialism? Nehru went on to elaborate his belief that the continuation of the colonial administration was one of the main causes of India's inability to solve the problem of poverty. Nehru and many others had been critical, then why did the Congress change its position in the 1940s and opt for retaining an ICS framework and the tradition of administration it represented is enigma.

The British administration in India was primarily concerned with the promotion and protection of imperial interests. The civil servants therefore were more oriented towards the ruling class rather than taking care of public interest or welfare. This orientation to superiority complex and aloofness from the general public largely shaped the administrative culture during the British period. Independent India aimed and opted for a Welfare State as reflected in the Constitution. The Constitution is so designed so as to bring about the social and economic development..To fulfill the Constitutional mandate the State has introduced a number of programmes. However, the Constitutional vision of an egalitarian society did not create civil servant suited for the purpose. The administrative systems remained by and large untouched. There have been no attempts to reform the system. The mainstream political movement in India was profoundly influenced by the Gandhian approach which emphasized the attainment of Sarvodaya through Anthyodaya but did not raise the question of reforming the administration correspondingly. Yet the Constitutional spirit seems to have thrown up individual's who strove to realize the vision. S. R. Sankaran was one such offshoot of Constitutional vision of equality and social justice. He hails from a tradition of

people who joined IAS to work for the downtrodden. He never walked down from that basic objective no matter what the character of the ruling structure was. The changing nature of the state did not impact on his commitment to the Constitutional mandate from where he derived his strength and power.

Sankaran (which is discussed earlier had his full tenure of 35 years in the IAS and retired as Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. Throughout his career he was steadfast in working for the poor. His pro-poor activities as a Joint Collector and District Collector, Nellore in two innings marked the beginning of his career as a “Poor Man’s Collector”. His style as young District Collector was so appealing to the masses and activists, the poor considered him as a friend. His concentration on distribution of lands, house-sites to the SCs, STs and BCs, implementation of land reforms with unusual effectiveness and passion, eviction of rich land owners from their encroachments on government lands and making such lands and government-owned cultivable “waste” lands available to the SCs, STs and other poor for house sites and cultivation, his firm action against “untouchability” and practice of camping in the SC bastis with police forces to see that the allottee was free to cultivate the land without further intimidation from the landlords had naturally invited the wrath of the landed gentry and certain powerful persons occupying higher administrative and political positions. In other words Sankaran’s first priority was to extricate the Dalits from exploitative agrarian relation by assigning land to them under the land reforms programme. This he pursued with determination and finesse, not only in his district collectors post but throughout his career.

Serving as a Special Assistant in the Ministry of Steel and Mines, he was instrumental in the nationalization of coal mines. His logical argument impressed the structure that it could not ignore Sankaran’s initiatives. After a detailed survey of the coal mines, he observed that there was no evidence of any sustained efforts on the part of the private collieries to improve the working conditions in the Mines and act upon labour laws. He also observed that integrated development of coal reserves with regard to long term public interest was possible only under the public sector. This adequately reflects his clarity of approach to development and change.

In his two tenures as Secretary and Principal Secretary of Social Welfare, he availed himself of every opportunity to put in practice the fundamental Constitutional principles of equality, non-discrimination, justice and affirmative action in favour of the economically backward sections. The sensitivity and commitment with which he pioneered on the abolition of bonded labour (liberate the dalits from the scourge of debt –bondage marks as a watershed in the administrative history of Andhra Pradesh. In doing this he asserted that this was the mandate of the Constitution, and he came in confrontation with the powerful Chief Minister of the State; when the Chief Minister insisted that he should stop releasing the bonded labour, as the relationship between a Master and slave was not bonded labour. Sankaran dissented this and asserted (with a proof of agreement signed by the bonded labour and the master which he had seized from the landlord that had all the details such as money borrowed, number of years to work, name of the landlord therefore he would continue to work for freeing the bonded labourers, This act of Sankaran in late 1970's, made him a legend in the state of Andhra Pradesh. He, derived his strength from the constitutional mandate, which was further reinforced with the enthusiastic support of people's movement due to his honesty of purpose.

It should be noted that in the late 70's onwards the state was becoming more and more repressive and anti-people. While the state was generating hopes it was not able to fulfill the hopes and aspirations. The high voltage rhetoric of land reforms "garibi hatao", abolition of bonded labour, land reforms remained unfulfilled promise. Further the State was losing its integrity and capacity to withstand pressures, the more vulnerable also became more assertive as a part of the democratic process. What happened to bureaucracy the principal instrument of State? The agency was becoming the custodian of class interest, meaning the interest of the ruling class, thus the State and its institutions were on decline. A Judicial Commission led by Justice Shah which investigated these traumatic and shameful 18 months of suspended freedom, famously observed that "when the 'civil servants' were asked to bend they crawled"<sup>1</sup>. A mass betrayal by the civil servants of the stated institutional goals. In the later decades the same failure to resist illegal orders growingly marked official behaviour, greater and greater sections of the civil servants were captivated and obeyed illegal instructions and denied people of their constitutional rights. Sankaran swam bravely against the current refusing to obey unjust and illegal orders.



While Chief Minister Chenna Reddy, was a constraint to fulfill constitutionally formulated mandate of the state. Tripuras experience reveals that four time Chief Minister Mr. Nripen Chakraborty was a possibility which facilitated the agency (CS to pursue and push forward in a remarkably novel means the social welfare agenda of the constitution.

Nripen was a possibility while Chenna Reddy was a constraint. However the agent due to his “commitment” worked in a same fashion and style uncompromisingly. He was responsive in a responsive state as much in a repressive state too. The two Spartan bachelors (CM & CS of Tripura were “mutual” in the agenda of social justice and equality, found acceptability as an important basis for advice, while the general trend was conflictual relations.

As principle state actors with sufficient power for policy making and implementing, were judiciously determining “who deserves what” while distribution of goods. Since state and its agency assumes a primary role of the decider to determine who gets what; the legitimate concern of the two was income distribution through distributing of “surplus” such as Government land, creating of assets and promoting entitlements and what the people deserve, who are far flung in interior villages. The CS and CM took long tours on foot (a legend which never happened before or after along with officials of the department to distribute and allocate assets on the spot. Such a style of asset distribution has led to unprecedented “distributive justice” and equality of opportunities. This study is a counter evidence to the public choice debate, a theory of politics also called “the economics of politics” which explains political and bureaucratic behavior on the assumption that these actors are “utility maximizers” who seek to promote their own interest, against the pursuit of public interest, both the state and the agency. Not only were the surplus resources of the state distributed but Nripen Chakravarty the Chief Minister of the state for four consecutive periods and earlier a Minister for many times had no bank account. Sankaran spent most part of his salary during the June 1980 communal disturbance to meet the civil supplies for the riot hit victims. Therefore due to such potential of the state, primarily to meet the basic requirements of the people, there is a massive campaigning for “calling back the state to the centre stage”.

Sankaran's field of activity was so significant to the country, based on the Constitutional mandate that the structure could not set aside with disapprobation his mandate for the poor, although there were hostilities and obstacles from the ruling class and superior administrative officers. The overall experience and evidence suggests that State, to Sankaran is not an idea – an electorate system of government, but an instrument of the government to formulate and enforce policies for a fundamental social transformation. It is expected to play an enormous role in the ill-defined and constantly expanding field of “development”. Thus the state was seen by the agent as the primary instrument of development with extensive responsibilities in redistribution of resources. Sankaran never scoffed at the system but diligently worked by tapping his moral authority until the system responded.

In the absence of legal-rational authority after his superannuation he created an agency outside the state, with people of public credibility to negotiate for peace between the Naxalites and the Government of Andhra Pradesh.

Having served the Indian people through the state for almost three and half decades, he superannuated and sought no other positions of power. He chose to live in the State of Andhra Pradesh. It was his “moral power” which was the gravitational force which indeed compelled the government and the Maoists to respond. The efforts of this Committee of which Sankaran was the Convenor dominated a decade of Sankaran's life. The State, society and the movements took the initiative very seriously. The endeavours received open support of all political parties, trade unions, teacher associations, democratic groups and more significantly of media. The event in Andhra Pradesh between 1997 and 2005, when the Committee of concerned citizens headed by Sankaran played a significant role, is extremely revealing. The CCC made a broad based effort to move the debate away from the violence – counter violence question and to center stage the democratic aspirations of the people in the violence torn rural areas of Telangana.

While this study takes Weberian legal-rational authority as a theoretical underpinning, and examines the Weberian typologies. The study explores the adequacy of Weber's legal rational authority for development and change. Weber was able to locate bureaucracy in the larger economic context, as he observes that bureaucracy is a product of surplus and to maintain these surplus the “personnels” are required. In his categorization of

authority compared to the traditional and charismatic authority, the legal- rational authority is far superior than the earlier forms of authority which were both coercive and arbitrary.<sup>1</sup> Modern literature on public administration has internalized the weberian legal rational authority as ideal type as also a perspective and practice.

The dominant discourse in bureaucracies therefore is of legal- rational authority. In terms of its legitimacy of power Weber extolled the virtues of bureaucracy as its form is in the legal- rational authority, the concept itself indicates that what is legal is also rational. Weber is right when he stated that the other forms of authority viz, traditional and charismatic are non-rational or irrational. The question does not arise whether the legal and rational concepts are necessarily positive and developmental.<sup>2</sup> Max weber also avoided the moral question in that his project of legal- rational authority lacks normativism. For capitalism is always legal and rational and can get justified but not on moral grounds. Further the application of rational approach to public policy issues was rendering technical solutions to social and economic problems for achieving goals through administrative means, vexing social and economic problems were interpreted as issues that needed to be managed better with imposed programme design; their solutions were to be found in the objective collection of data and their application of technical decision- making approaches. This rational technocratic - approach in large part defined the policy science since the 1960s<sup>3</sup>.It found resonance in the value of efficiency embedded in all economic and managerial thinking and therefore dominated the way governments defined their problems and found solutions for them. All social and political issues became questions of efficiency, performance and productivity.

The defining principle of “rationality project as the rational choice of the alternatives available to the decision maker.”<sup>4</sup> Bureaucrats as one of the social actors and rational beings attempt to maximize their utilities , for this; under objective conditions they make subjective preferences which can maximize their interest and this they demonstrate and project as, “objective truth” by rational techniques which is as often as not the product of deeper less viable political pre-suppositions.

Sankaran with unique administrative attributes unlocks an administrative style which does not fit into any of the known administrative models. The attributes are – simplicity, accessibility, transparency, bachelorhood, absences of domestic commitment, selfless, impartiality, marginalized people as the central concern, service orientation, humane motivation, intimate citizen administrator relationship, absence of aspiration for political favours, honesty and courage of conviction, stress on purpose than on process. Using authority and power not hierarchically but as instruments to strike humane superior – subordinate relationship. Added to these are his democratic method of supervision, respect for human dignity, ethical sensitivity, accessible, available and approachable. This model is identified as moral-legal- rational authority and forms a complimentary to the webarian typology ;for his “style” is not the negation of the legal rational type but moves beyond the neutrality and even anonymity. It is the former where the administrator commits himself to a larger humane and democratic course.

The present study has traced unique traits of a “Brahmin bureaucrat” deliberate the dense “publicness” and public interest in this moral authority in pursuit of public interest ‘throughout’ under the objective conditions of predatory agenda of the structure stands contrast to the self-interest pursuit of bureaucracy, therefore rationality pursues self-interest and morality pursues public interest. He commanded utmost respect at all levels demonstrating that moral authority that one carries surpasses all forms of formal authority. Sankaran’s moral power was backed by his intellectual capabilities, administrative skills, unfailing memory of the rules and several regulations. He was able to recall the detailed provisions of any act from the memory with an unbelievable ease. His colleagues, superiors, political authorities depended on his advice and support. His methodology for identifying the bonded labour became a national document to be lived and emulated in all the states for identifying and releasing the bonded labours. His rehabilitation package for the victims of atrocities was so comprehensive and sustainable that the state and administration would not set aside with disapprobation. His contribution and notings for reservation of seats in Panchayathi Raj institutions and later leading to the 93<sup>rd</sup> and 94<sup>th</sup> amendments is a history in itself. This indeed formed the “manifesto” for the ruling class. Noting that rationality with its economic bureaucracy ingrained in efficiency and economy would have ever done such work. In other words sankarans’ moral authority was a blend of capitalist competency and

socialist commitment backed by populous support is essence of the model. It s is often recounted in the galaxy of the IAS that Sankaran “would be the world class administrator anywhere in the world.”

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