

HARMONY

Connecting the IAS Community

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Harmony 113

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Accountability

A local city daily recently carried a news report of an individual who, while waiting on the platform of a railway station slipped on a banana peel and accidentally fell on the railway tracks. He was run over by an approaching train and had to unfortunately have his legs amputated. The gentleman was a railway employee and he was suing the organization for negligence.

The incident raises interesting legal questions that are common to similar cases involving a chain of responsibility and begs the question of accountability. Are the Railways solely accountable for keeping the platform safe? Is the banana vendor responsible for selling the fruits and not ensuring proper disposal of the waste? Should the passenger have been more careful, considering that the primary onus of safety lies on the individual himself? Assume that the passenger was speaking on his mobile phone when he slipped, would the Railways have the same degree of accountability as if he were fully alert? Where does one entity's responsibility and accountability stop and the other's begin?

This is a simple instance; chains of responsibility are often more complex. As the "rule of law" matures in a democracy and administrations are held to be more accountable, jurisprudence is bound to raise more intricate questions. An

appropriate response of meeting the challenges and avoiding conflicts would be to design a charter that clearly delineates responsibilities and accountabilities of individuals within an entity and between entities.

■ (Editorial Team)

PC Alexander Is No More

Dr. PC Alexander, IAS 1948, and the former Governor of Maharashtra breathed his last on 10th August 2011 in Chennai at the age of 90.

Dr. Alexander held many key assignments in the Service including that of Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister. Post retirement, he served as Indian High Commissioner in London and Governor of Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Goa. He was later elected as a member of the Rajya Sabha.

May the departed soul rest in peace. ■



Azeez Khan Leaves IAS

Mr. Azeez M Khan, IAS 1979, sought voluntary retirement from IAS after 32 years of distinguished service. His last posting was that of Principal Secretary (Industry), Government of Maharashtra.

We wish him all the best in his future endeavours. ■



Strength

A 15 year old boy decided to study judo despite the fact that he had lost his left arm in a devastating car accident.

The boy began lessons with an old Japanese judo master. The boy was doing well, so he couldn't understand why, after three months of training the master had taught him only one move.

"Sensei" (Teacher in Japanese), the boy finally said, "Shouldn't I be learning more moves?" "This is the only move you'll ever need to know," the sensei replied.

Not quite understanding, but fully believing in his teacher, the boy kept training. Several months later, the sensei took the boy to his first tournament.

Surprising himself, the boy easily won his first two matches. The third match proved to be more difficult, but after some time, his opponent became impatient and charged; the boy deftly used his one move to win the match. Still amazed by his success, the boy was now in the finals.

This time, his opponent was bigger, stronger, and more experienced. For a while, the boy appeared to be overmatched. Concerned that the boy might get hurt, the referee called a time-out.

He was about to stop the match when the sensei intervened. "No," the sensei insisted, "Let him

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What Next?

S Jambunathan

It was a happy ending. Everyone was watching with bated breath the TV channels and heaved a sigh of relief, when the curtains were drawn with Mr.



Pranab Mukherjee moving the resolution and getting the "Sense of the House" with a "thumping majority"! It was also a happy sight next day to see Anna sipping *nariyal pani*, offered by two young children.

The remarkable thing about the entire development is that this whole agitation, which, with the initial inept handling, became a Mass Movement, was conducted in the most peaceful manner, keeping up the highest Gandhian values.

The debate in the parliament, publicly witnessed, thanks to the media, though conducted along party lines soon matured into a responsible and reasonable direction. Coupled with wise leadership on both sides, this approach led to the happy ending.

Now the question in the mind of everybody is "What next"?

One thing is certain. The sense of total helplessness on the part of the common man and the almost total absence of fear and, shall I add, shame on the part of the corrupt lot will undergo a sea change.

My fear is that this momentum of optimism and enthusiasm will get diluted, if sustained and specific follow up action is not taken by all concerned,

via government, opposition, civil society, media, business and industry.

Mere passing of legislation like the proposed Lokpal Bill is not adequate, more important is its implementation and monitoring at all levels. Our experience in this country does not encourage optimism in this regard. There are restrictions by the Election Commission, a constitutional body on the total amount of money spent on election by the candidates. Is this being followed and monitored?

Even now we learn about child marriages in some states, despite "Sharada Act" enacted several decades back. The vice-like grip in some parts of the society by the narcotics mafia, in spite of tough legislation in this subject highlight the enormous difficulties of implementation. We hear about police reforms every now and then. We know the problems and also the solutions. We see only cosmetic and superficial improvements. All these have to change.

Theoretical and argumentative approach should end. For example there is really no conflict between Parliament and the peoples' power. We have chosen Parliamentary form of Government, instead of a Military Dictatorship or Monarchy. While parliament is supreme in making legislation, passing budget etc., it is subject to the Constitutional provisions enumerated by the wise authors in 1950. It is also subject to the interpretation, judicial review and judicial pronouncements of the Supreme Court.

As far as peoples' power is concerned, this is an intoxicating and, at times, dangerous concept, if

it falls in the hands of scheming and resourceful miscreants, who may prop up populist agenda and confront and provoke the law enforcement machinery.

In fact, many of the law and order situations in the country, be it language riots, communal riots or other regional conflicts owe their origin to such misconceived "peoples' power" and inept clumsy handling by the local authorities.

It is a long-term agenda to reach the final goal, as everybody realizes. Electoral Funding Reforms, judicial reforms to provide speedy justice, removal of unnecessary and time barred controls, effective decentralization of power, elimination of shortages and professional training, cutting red tapism and paper work are some of the things which need constant and continuous attention.

Along with attacking and taking action on corruption, it is very important that honesty and integrity are given high recognition in any assessment of merit, and suitably rewarded.

(Mr. S Jambunathan, IAS 1961, Retd. can be contacted by email: vjambu@hotmail.com.)

Some Interesting Laws

Anthony's Law of the Workshop:

Any tool, when dropped, will roll to the least accessible corner.

Kovac's Conundrum:

When you dial a wrong number, you never get an engaged one.

The cure for the evils of democracy is more democracy

The Blind Side

By Sujata Chahande

We moved to the USA for a year in January 2010, as Sanjay was nominated for the Executive Masters Programme in Public Administration



at Syracuse University. This had been a very turbulent shift for us as we had just been transferred from Nashik to Mumbai. Since it took some time to get a quarter allotted in Mumbai, we were in transit. Our family was split in two groups with my in-laws staying back in Nashik, while we shifted to Mumbai since our children had to start their school.

Barely had we shifted into our house the US call came and we started packing and running around shopping in preparedness for the move to the new city. US *per se* wasn't new to us since we had been here for a short trip in 2005. But when we stay for a short time it's a nice rosy picture and one sees the different facets only when one spends more time.

My first view of Syracuse city was from high up before our plane landed. We had heard about the severe winters and the sub-zero temperatures but words cannot prepare you for the experiences that are in store. So, here I was, looking down at the city only to realize it was completely covered with snow with no bare land in sight. For a minute I wondered and must admit was scared thinking which world we were heading for and thoughts like 'Oh – Oh! Did we make the right decision about coming with our children' also

came to my mind. Actually our decision about coming over to Syracuse was also taken impulsively, for Sanjay got only a day to think.

I remember that evening when he came back from office and we went for a nice evening stroll and that's where he broke the news. It was already 8 pm and he had to reply within the next 12 hours. We had to weigh within minutes the pros and cons of coming over, about leaving our parents, our jobs, our children's schooling, our finances. Although staying back was apparently a better option at that point, we decided to go for it. Though our children would have to cope with their studies since we were to join midway here, it did seem to be an enriching experience and a good exposure for them. I was to have a totally different experience too, for I was going to be a full time home-maker (sans personal help, aids, maids & occasional pampering of oneself).

After a long journey we landed at Syracuse with our heavy over-sized suitcases. Fortunately for us we had some good local samaritans who received us and dropped us to our apartment. We had to begin work the minute we landed in this country, right from the airport, picking the huge bags from the belt into the car and then to our apartment. We had rented the only available apartment which was unfurnished (the cost of renting a furnished one was much higher).

We were fortunate since our colleague who had come to fetch us had fixed up a deal to buy a mattress for us, so Sanjay started to shop for our new home the very night we landed. It was so very

difficult for him to bring that heavy huge mattress from the next building to ours since we were just adjusting to the weather outside and it was difficult to walk even a few blocks in the snow. We put the mattress in our living room while we brought the rest of the luggage only to realize that the journey and time lag had worn out our children Shourya and Sakshi so much that they slept right away. Our friend brought some food for the night and some milk, eggs and bread for the morning. Fortunately I had carried a few essential kitchen utensils so I had the kitchen rolling the day we landed.

We woke up to witness a beautiful morning, snow-covered streets, trees and cars. Back home we had seen the snow only in the hill stations and that too only in the winters. Fortunately our apartment was very well heated so we were comfortable in our home, but the journey had just begun.

We were fortunate enough to have Indians settled here who were helping foreign students coming to the University. This led us to be introduced to an elderly couple who helped us to go shopping for our basic amenities as and when we needed and familiarizing us with the neighborhood.

The three students started school; Shourya and Sakshi to Middle School and Sanjay to Maxwell School of Public Administration. Sanjay had to finish five courses and hence, was busy from 8 to 5 Monday to Friday while finishing his assignments on weekends apart from the family tasks. Setting up home here was a unique experience. Using second-hand furniture or picking up furniture

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The only courage that matters is the kind that gets you from one moment to the next

The Blind...

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left for disposal is a common norm amongst the average Americans. This was shocking for us when we had to furnish our home. We couldn't digest the thought at first but as the prices for new furniture were exorbitant and with the meagre financial support that our government offered it was very difficult to even think about it especially when we had only a year to stay.

I remember one day uncle (the couple that I mentioned earlier) took us to a dumpster and said "They have just moved out a couch. You can grab it and take it home. It's in a good condition, students do it all the time". It was snowing heavily; we stood there stunned in the freezing cold not knowing how to react. The couch was a suede leather couch in excellent condition with very good wood belonging to some rich professor there. Uncle even tied up with someone to have it moved to our apartment for a price if we so desired.

While we looked at each other, uncle went along and brought our children there for we could not leave children under 12 unattended. So the kids joined in to see what we were up to. That did it, Sanjay just decided to walk away. We preferred not to have a couch like this picked from the garbage. We did not want to give our children this experience. It was fine for them not to have a few things instead. For all the while we teach our children that it is not right to take things which belong to others even if it's free. Call it false pride but we just couldn't gather ourselves to do so.

The very next day Sanjay

ended up going to a charity shop which sold things at cheaper rates. We got the furniture for the house probably brought in from similar places but brought home with pride. But this experience was an eye opener for us to the life of some students abroad and how they coped with the circumstances and stress in a foreign land.

Thanks to the internet chats and the phone calls we did not feel homesick. Life began to settle down and soon winter gave way to spring and then summer. We could now move around freely (literally because we did not wear those cumbersome jackets and thermals). We were also oriented with the places around and had bought a car so we started exploring new places on our own and began enjoying our stay.

Just as with every new place we gather new experiences and new wisdom, so here I was trying to understand the system and culture, all the while comparing it with our own culture. Interestingly this time I was seeing the blind side of everything too. On the personal front it was a satisfying experience, for both of us paused our hectic life and gave time to each other putting away the various title roles that we played back home. Guess as time passes by, we take each other for granted, so much so that we forget to notice or maybe forget to express after noticing the difference that one made for the other. There the needs and efforts of each other were easily recognized, so was the mutual support for each other.

Talking about seeing the blind side and coming to the larger picture if we were to take the increasing incidence of divorce here I was attributing it to the

independence of women, their better social status and their awareness of rights, which seemingly led to clashes among couples in a hitherto male dominant setup. But on a closer look I realized this was far from the complete truth. Other factors like unemployment, work pressures, survival of the fittest, etc play a bigger role. If you take an average American couple, they need to earn their daily wages on hourly basis, so the more they work the more they earn, which makes them burn the candle at both ends. With the added responsibility of household chores and children they hardly have quality time with each other. So all they share with each other is their pain, stress, problems and occasional joys of workplace (which seldom happen).

To add to it they live in nuclear families with interactions limited to each other and occasional socializing depending upon financial and social status thus leaving no new inputs, thoughts or ideas. When things go wrong you don't have anyone around to comfort you and guide you appropriately the way we have either our elders or close-knit family members back home. So either they suffer, or seek outside help like the counsellors, if they can afford. So problems that could have had simple solutions go out of proportion and end up in divorce. They go ahead with another marriage and the cycle continues.

I would also think this to be the reason for the various addictions amongst the youth there. With busy working parents and unsettled homes and no one to guide them, the children resort to other ways of seeking comfort and pleasures. They talk about doing drugs, alcohol,

Courage is the ladder on which all the other virtues mount

and smoking as they are the easiest form of pleasures for them. The joy of sharing your day's experiences with your parents and elders, their admiration and advice, a pat on the back, small gifts and prizes in return are always more rewarding and longer lasting, which they seldom enjoy.

The legal system has also fallen prey to this culture. With the increasing number of divorce and remarriages the children end up with parents who may not be biological parents which sometimes yields to increasing number of atrocities and crime against children. So very stringent laws are imposed as regards children to safe guard them but this raises other issues. You cannot even spank your child even if he misbehaves or ill treats adults. Any bystander can complain if they feel a parent is not treating his or her child appropriately, and the child can land in shelter home and parents may end up in jail!

All this adds to the stress, for the children here know about their rights from a very early age and are also vocal about it though they lack the maturity and understanding of the implication of law and end up behaving inappropriately with elders. There is no distinction in the eyes of law between the biological parents and the other parents. With all this happening around some of them run away from situations hoping to find better options and deals and end up with multiple break ups and marriages. During a very casual discussion with one of the elderly couples staying here I enquired when was the last time he had heard from his children (he is in his 4th marriage while she is enjoying her 2nd). He said they meet up usually at

family members' funerals. I was aghast.

Another interesting incident that I remember is of a young American girl who befriended me and went on to ask me about our culture and whether we still had arranged marriages and asked about my own. As we discussed about the pros and cons about arranged and love marriages she exclaimed 'I can't imagine my mom picking one for me' to which I said 'Why not? You may never know she may be able to find a good match too'. She reacted with a very sorry face, 'I hope she doesn't, for she couldn't find one for herself!' (Her mom had two broken marriages). How does one expect such children to acquire any value system for they pass on to their kids what they have inherited, and the cycle continues. With the world coming closer as a global village these aspects are seeping into other cultures too.

The teenage pregnancies seem to be another area of concern. With the government funding the unmarried teenage pregnancies, the youngsters are not deterred by the responsibility and burden of bringing up a family.

One does see the staunch, rich, cultured white Americans with glimpses of social divide - economic and cultural. While on public transport the large majority is of black people, at a baseball match it is difficult to spot a non-white. In recreation facilities or places where entry tickets are required, again it is dominated by white people. Lesser said about the Native Americans (the Red Indians) the better. We were in a county called 'Onondaga', which is in fact an 'Indian Nation', meaning it is autonomous area where Indian

council has jurisdiction with some special provisions and privileges. We just happened to go by car to this area and we were wondering whether we were in America! It had bad roads, very poor quality housing, and filth strewn around. But the privileges that the Natives share are always a matter of discussion among Americans including the black Americans. So the question of foreigners taking away their job opportunities isn't surprising.

Another government aided programme which people misuse is the one designed for prisoners and law offenders. The citizens here complain about the better life style and the facilities offered to the inmates who don't deserve it since it is funded from the tax payers' money. Seemingly, the inmates' lifestyle is better than that of the lower socio-economic class. In fact I do remember seeing some beggars here on the roads, bus stations, railway stations except that they travel on buses and / or in government funded motorized wheel chairs for the handicapped.

I think I have highlighted the blind side much more than the beautiful visible side which is obviously known to all, maybe even experienced by most of them. During our stay there, we met with old friends, made some new ones and met the families of our colleagues who were there for summer. When the new batch joined at Syracuse, being the senior ones it was our duty to guide them on their accommodation, help them with settling up their homes, taking them shopping etc.

The end was hectic too - packing and disposing our stuff,
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When valour preys on reason, it eats the sword it fights with

Remembering Dr. Alexander

By Dr. DK Sankaran

The death of Dr. PC Alexander, former Rajya Sabha Member and former Governor of Maharashtra brought back memories of my interactions with him on many occasions. He was a gracious man, with old world charm; at the same time he was a stickler for rules and a disciplinarian.



He came as the Governor of Maharashtra when the State was undergoing a convulsion with a communal riot and serial bomb blast in Mumbai in 1993. A thorough professional bureaucrat that he was, his mere presence was reassuring to the people. Though our elected government was in place, he loomed over the state in a larger than life manner.

My first contact with him was when I was in-charge of Elections in the State as the Chief Electoral Officer. We had started the Election Identity Card system in the State and as the first citizen of the State, I wanted to begin with him. He was skeptical of the new system but I convinced him to get his Election Identity Card prepared. He had many misgivings about the new changes being ushered in by the legendary Chief Election Commissioner, Mr. TN Seshan. I gradually convinced him that the revolutionary measures being introduced by Mr. Seshan would prove to be a positive development for our democracy.

He continued as the

Governor of the State, when the first BJP - Shiv Sena Government came to power in 1996. I remember him complimenting the election team for conducting one of the best general elections in the State. Even though he was an appointee of Congress Government leader Mr. PV Narasimha Rao, the BJP - Shiv Sena Government found in him a neutral umpire, who in a quiet way gave the government strength and support. In fact, his neutrality was so much appreciated that he was a serious contender for the Presidency of the country.

My next series of interactions with him was when he was a member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of the Ministry of Home Affairs and I was Secretary to Government of India in the MHA, handling Border Management. Whenever he attended the Standing Committee meetings his mature views and opinions were always valued. Whether the discussions were on Police reforms or coastal security they were taken very seriously.

Dr. PC Alexander was a Civil Servant in the traditional mould who rose to commanding heights – Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, High Commissioner, State Governor and Member of Parliament – due to his commitment to duty, intimate knowledge of complex issues, political neutrality and commitment to the Country.

He lived a full life - the Biblical four score and ten years. He was a sagacious man. He was a family man deeply, attached to his wife. My wife Joyce and I remember fondly many a quiet dinner and breakfasts we had with him. In a span of a few days Maharashtra has

lost two public men Mr. BG Deshmukh and Dr. Alexander who played important notes in the public life of Maharashtra. Both were quintessential public servants with deep commitment to the State and the Country. Both will be fondly remembered. May their souls Rest in Peace.

(Dr. DK Sankaran, IAS 1970, Retd is former Chief Secretary, Government of Maharashtra and can be contacted through Email: theshankarans@gmail.com.)

Strength

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continue." Soon after the match resumed, his opponent made a critical mistake: he dropped his guard. Instantly, the boy used his move to pin him. The boy had won the match and the tournament.

On the way home, the boy and sensei reviewed every move in each and every match. Then the boy summoned the courage to ask what was really on his mind.

"Sensei, how did I win the tournament with only one move?"

"You won for two reasons," the sensei answered. "First, you've almost mastered one of the most difficult throws in all of judo. And second, the only known defense for that move is for your opponent to grab your left arm."

The boy's biggest weakness had become his biggest strength...

Sometimes we feel that we have certain weaknesses and we blame our circumstances or ourselves for it but we never know that our weaknesses can become our strengths one day.

Who Goes Where

Mr. IS Chahal (1989): Secretary, Medical Education ■ *Mr. DS Zagade (1991):* Maharashtra Competitive Agriculture Project, Pune ■ *Ms. Seema Vyas (1992):* Director, Disaster Management Division, R & FD ■ *Mr. Mahesh Zagade (1993):* Commissioner, FDA ■ *Mr. RL Mopalwar (1995):* Member Secretary, Maharashtra Jeevan Pradhikaran ■ *Mr. GB Maware (1998):* Collector, Solapur ■ *Mr. TK Bagul (1998):* Joint MD, MSRTC ■ *Mr. JD Patil (1998):* MD, MTDC ■ *Ms. Anshu Sinha (1999):* Additional Commissioner, Nagpur Municipal Corporation ■ *Mr. PM Mahajan (2001):* Collector, Dhule ■ *Mr. Omprakash Bakoria (2006):* CEO, Zilla Parishad, Sindhudurg ■ *Mr. Dheeraj Kumar (2006):* CEO, National Rural Livelihoods Mission, Navi Mumbai ■ *Mr. P Pradeep (2009):* Project Officer, Integrated Tribal Development Project and Assistant Collector, Dharni ■

Security of People Top Most Priority: CM Independence Day Celebrations

Security of the people is our top most priority and the State Government is fully geared up to face the situation, stated the Chief Minister Mr. Prithviraj Chavan while addressing people at the flag hoisting ceremony on the occasion of Independence Day celebrations in Mumbai.

The Chief Minister further said that a comprehensive industrial policy is being formulated to give

impetus to industrial development, encourage export and generate employment opportunities. He also assured that the problems of mill workers and slums rehabilitation will be solved soon.

He stated that a study committee under the chairmanship of Dr Vijay Kelkar has been appointed for removal of regional imbalance in the development of State.

Stating that the declining girl child ratio in the State is a matter of great concern, he appealed that people should come forward to curb the menace of female foeticide.

Special initiatives are taken to make maximum use of e-governance to bring efficiency and transparency in the administration. Tenders of more than Rs 50 lakh are accepted through e-tendering, the CM said.

He also mentioned that 1.7 crore people in Maharashtra have registered their names for the Aadhaar card under a national campaign launched last year.

Minister for Protocol, Mr. Suresh Shetty; Mayor, Ms.

Shraddha Jadhav; Chief Secretary, Mr. Ratnakar Gaiwad and senior officers and employees of Mantralaya were present on the occasion. ■



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Whatever is chased runs away