

# Image of the IAS

The emperor had no clothes. But the courtiers competed with each other in extolling the liness of the cloth material used for the robes that the emperor was wearing. It took an innocent child to cry out that the emperor was naked. The child had to be punished for treason.

Some people accuse the anti-corruption movement in the IAS for giving it a bad name. They can make this charge for no other reason than that the people involved in the movement stated the self evident truth like the child who saw the emperor.

The cat firmly closed its eyes while drinking the milk kept in the kitchen. Out of a little curiosity it opened its eyes for a fleeting second just when received a hard kick from the housewife. The cat thought that it was a great mistake to have opened its eyes. That was why the housewife could see what was happening, guessed the cat.

They say that the anti-corruption movement is responsible for creating a bad image for the service. Remember that the housewife was all the time watching the IAS drinking the milk meant for her kids. We only had deluded ourselves by closing our eyes. Some people still want to close their eyes and imagine that the service enjoy a great reputation in the eyes of the people of the state.

In our opinion it is nothing but arrogance to think that the general public in this politically conscious state was at any time incapable of seeing through the procedural pomposity of the premier service to miss the dishonorable intentions of many of its members. This self-deception naturally occurs to only such people who live in an ivory tower thinking that the general public is inferior to them in intelligence. Maybe they could not appear in the competitive examinations or qualify for selection in the IAS. But they are no fools. If somebody thinks that they are inferior in their capacity to detect human feeling or that they cannot sense meanness from a distance, he is sadly mistaken. In fact they are infinitely sharper in dissecting the action of the ruling class. But one can close his eyes firmly by snapping all contacts with them. If a person travels only by air, frequents only the exclusive clubs in the town, or eats out only at five star hotels, he is bound to get the impression that he is doing wonderfully well for himself without the world knowing it. In such places, he will come across only people of his own class.

But go to the tea-vendor at the street corner, travel with the ordinary people in crowded sweaty buses, or talk to a farmer returning exhausted from the heat and dust of a day's toil, and we would know that the system that we are running is hated, despised and detested. Not any one person in particular, but we as a class are held responsible for the mess. But conveniently avoid such confrontations and safely ensconce oneself in the air-conditioned comforts of one's luxurious drawing rooms, he can feel that he is doing

wonderfully well. Who can prevent you from day dreaming? Who can stop you from self delusion?

In fact, an answer to the question whether the anti-corruption movement lowered the image of the service or not depends on the segment of the society whose opinion you are counting. You can look at the social parasites of your own class and feel convinced that it has indeed gone down. In the eyes of the idle rich, whose importance is measured in terms of their proximity to bureaucrats, or in the words of the third rung politicians who draw their sustenance from bureaucrats benevolence, or in the perception of the sly operators of the market who depend on bureaucrats for information and protection, the image of the service has definitely gone down as a result of the recent campaign. Such people derive benefit only if the bureaucracy remain self-important and corrupt. But go to the people at large, and you will get a different feed back. Meet the general citizens who are at the receiving end of administrative functioning and you will hear encomiums for the daring effort of the IAS officers for self-correction. Talk to the school teacher, the educated farmers, the non-gazetted staff of the government department, passengers in the second class railway compartments, or the educated unemployed, they will praise the movement in superlative terms.

But why should I care for the opinion of such riff-raff? Somebody can ask. Our answer to such people is that this is where our perceptions and their perceptions and their perceptions differ. We firmly believe that we have been selected in the IAS for removing a little bit of misery from the poorest and the wretched of the earth. They believe that they have been granted this privilege by the grace of God for their own enjoyment and probably for the enjoyment of their future generations. We believe that we have no business to exist in the service unless we are able to show results in the assignments entrusted to us. They probably believe that success lies in accumulating wealth and enhancing comforts without getting caught.

East is east and west and unfortunately the twain can never meet.