



From the CGDA's Desk

It's been indeed a long while since I communicated with you. In point of fact, I had much to convey but – alas! – it never did happen. Why it turned out to be so I can't honestly explain. Doubtless, not because I wished to keep things from you all but possibly because things kept happening one after another in such rapid succession that I got swept up in the high tide of activities and it became well-nigh impossible to keep pace, make time to collect one's thoughts and tap my lazy fingers into the laptop's keyboard. Today, though, I resolved to break away from this habit, fully aware that I can't put it off any further because any more delay is likely to render such thoughts obsolete and underwhelming. Like justice, thoughts and ideas too have a shelf life with an irrevocable expiry date and a sense of irrelevance, don't they?

Amid the frenetic pace of things happening all around, I snuck out to visit few of our offices. Nagpur where I went to for attending a Pension Adalat and see for myself how issues of pensioners are sorted out, I had an extremely cordial meeting with Air Marshall Jagjeet Singh, AOC-in-C, Air Force Maintenance Command exchanging notes on various issues that confront us in our day to day official engagements. Immediately thereafter I addressed and interacted with the service officers and conveyed our commitment to the duties of our station and the changes that we are trying to bring about to improve upon our service delivery, and also the need for us to synergize. Later in the day, I visited the offices of CFA, Ambhajhari Group of Factories, IFA (AF) Maintenance Command, and JCDA (AF). I spoke to our staff and officers. It was nice to relate and interact and even meet old friends and colleagues. I did quite the same things in other offices I visited: CDA Secunderabad and CDA (R&D) Hyderabad and three offices here in New Delhi – CDA (AF), PCDA (R&D), PCDA (Headquarters).

Many transfers were effected during this period. Members of the two DAPBs for staff and officers up to Additional CDA level put in their best effort, mostly working over the weekends and sometimes even on working days amid their busy schedule. Often I was mortified for making them work on weekends but I must confess I have been deeply touched by their sense of commitment and dedication to the difficult job given them, not to speak of their sense of fairness, equity and justice. I can't thank Ms Swarnashree Rao, Shri Manish Tripathi and Shri Anand Agarwal enough. I say this because placement/transfer/posting is possibly the only thing that we all look forward to in our careers and are anxious and nervous about. It is so because behind these innocuous-looking transfer orders lie the wellness of the family, even often times the aging parents of either spouse. Most importantly, the

children's education and growth as also their future life and career are all in a way inextricably hooked to the offerings given them in their formative years. This is where we need to be careful to ensure that no nepotism and favouritism even remotely attends our action and everyone is offered a level-playing field and decisions made without a whisper of prejudice and bias, and regardless of the personnel known/unknown to the powers-that-be. People meet me at all times of the day, in my office or whenever I go out on tour, and I always meet them and give them a patient hearing. More often than not it is the issue of transfer. I keep telling them that everything would be fair and square based on objective facts as detailed in their applications and their meeting me would in no way add (or detract) anything in their favour to get them a place of their choice. It shall always be on merit, on facts boxed against other contenders for relative assessment alongside the functional need of the organization.

In my long years in bureaucracy I have noticed that this is where we often err when we allow personal likes and dislikes, prejudices and bias to take over and gain currency. I had over the years agonized over this, and had found no answer to get over this seeming bump. Till one day, few years ago, in a mellow Bangalore late afternoon sitting in my office room and looking out aimlessly at the tree next to the windows with shadows lengthening as the shiny orb dipped in the horizon, still mulling over this pesky issue, I suddenly experienced a Eureka moment when from the debris of my disembodied thoughts I seemed to have found an answer to this intractable problem. TRANSPARENCY! I didn't believe what I thought to be an answer. I pinched myself to ensure it was real and not a filament of one of my broken dreams transported across time and space. *Upload your decisions on the net, Old Boy!* I sensed a voice prompting me. *If you've the courage of your conviction go do just that. Public domain is like the marketplace where everything is put through the wringer. Only the best survive, all others vamoose – screaming, cursing, bristling, and with reputation besmirched! This is the ultimate test of honesty and fairness. Go ahead and do it if you mean what you say. Remember, sunlight is the best disinfectant, but also that most people – especially the high and mighty who preach what they never practice, and who lie through their teeth even to their so-called hot favourites – are scared of sunlight! People will be shocked when the innards with its putrescence, till now red-taped safely and lying smugly in the musty dusty files, are put out the first time around in the public domain. It would feel surreal, not real; even the eyes till date used to complete opacity will protest against the illumination offered on a platter, because they would (naturally) feel blinded with so much light granted them and would need adjusting to transparency! Because sunlight bares you, strips you to the skin, and you can't hide any further, you can't run for cover!*

I picked up the gauntlet and did just that the first time, yet again a second time, and thereafter times without number. Soon enough I realized that transparency is rather versatile: it makes people thinking units, it makes them more responsible, it leads to greater application of mind in workplaces, and with the net acting as an ombudsman it curbs arbitrariness, kick-starting everything in its sweep and making the system more efficient than ever before. I have never regretted, not even once, and not once have I looked back thereafter; far from it, over time I've seen people squirming in their seats and finally reconciling with the inevitable – this, the irrevocable transparency platform – and changing and calibrating accordingly. It will be foolhardy for some to still delude and indulge in throwback nostalgia and look back upon the past and wish for the golden (!) opaque days to return, but alas wishes will stay what they are – wishes! – for it's the inexorable forces of history and technology that have forced upon us a transparency revolution that we cannot wish away.

Chak De TRANSPARENCY!

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Sudhansu Mohanty