

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
Karnataka Regional Branch
Bengaluru

Report

The Karnataka Regional Branch of the IIPA launched a new initiative titled, “**Documenting Oral History of Eminent Civil Servants**” with the following objectives: To preserve institutional memory of Public Administration; to create a resource that can motivate and guide aspiring Civil Servants and young professionals by showcasing real-life narratives of integrity, leadership, and public service; to promote research and policy understanding; to highlight the evolution of bureaucratic culture; and to recognize and honour the contributions of distinguished Civil Servants,

This initiative was launched on 12th April 2025 at the Metropolitan Club, BTM Layout, Bengaluru with a conversation with the distinguished nonagenarian civil servant, **Shri S. Ramanathan, IAS** (Retd.) who served Karnataka and the country in remarkable ways in a career spanning 34 years. Shri S. Ramanathan is the recipient of several awards which include the **Karnataka Rajyotsava Award** in 1998. He is currently **Chairman Emeritus** of the Branch.

Shri S. Ramanathan recalled the advice of his father, late Sri K.S. Aiyar to him, upon his appointment to the Indian Administrative Service in 1952, to maintain the highest standards of integrity and to remain incorruptible always, which he followed in letter and spirit, in each posting, till his retirement in 1986. He recalled stories of his initiatives, innovations and best practices in his postings, in the State, at the Centre and in an international assignment as UN Community Development Expert in Afghanistan.

Shri S. Ramanathan recalled his long stint in the Civil Aviation sector as Joint Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation, Chairman of the International Airport Authority of India and the Vice-President of the International Airports Association, Paris, which contributed to his being appointed Chairman of the High-Level Committee that recommended the present site of the new Bangalore International Airport at Devanahalli.

Shri S. Ramanathan also recalled his post-retirement innings in the social, educational, trade, commerce, industry and tourism sectors. He was President of Sadashivanagar Residents Welfare Association from 1990 to 2018. As Chairman of the Karnataka Regional Branch of the IIPA for 32 years, he said he was immensely satisfied to have laid the foundation of a Branch which has been recognized as one of the **Best Performing Branches** in the country.

Shri S. Ramanathan recounted stories of his experiences in the Districts of Karnataka (then Mysore) where there was no electricity, no attached bathrooms, no water connections and where travel to interior villages had to be done on horseback. It was compulsory for Deputy Commissioners to tour for three weeks continuously and hold camps in villages to listen to public grievances and take immediate action to resolve them. He even undertook a day-long fast in one particular village to ensure that land was made available for the establishment of a Primary Health Centre.

Questions from the floor ranged from his experience in working with politicians, the shift in the IAS from a Generalist Service to a Specialist and Technical one, and the secret of his longevity! He said he was privileged to work with first generation politicians of impeccable integrity and commitment to nation building. He did not believe in punishing the errant subordinate staff but gave them sufficient time to mend their ways. He practised self-help, cleaned his own table and polished his own shoes. He was friendly and accessible to the public. His motto in public service was to help everyone. He led and continues to lead a disciplined life.

Shri K. Jairaj, IAS (Retd.) served as Interlocutor. **Shri T.M. Vijay Bhaskar, IAS (Retd.)** Chairperson, IIPA-KRB chaired the event. **Dr. D. Jeevan Kumar** provided a brief profile of Shri S. Ramanathan. **Smt. Shameem Banu, IAS (Retd.)** President, Metropolitan Club, proposed a vote of thanks.

