

Public servants & grandiloquent designations
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RECENTLY, I was intrigued to see a signboard in front of the office of a top ranking IRS



officer that read,

instead of any intimidating designation. I was happy that sometimes Customs & Central Excise officers do act as harbingers of change.

Hon'ble Justice, K.K. Sasidharan of Madras High Court, in a judgment stated "**the officers are forgetting the fact that they are "Public servants" and not "Masters of public"**". Unfortunately, bureaucracies have proliferated and multiplied, amassing enormous powers and vast jurisdictions. Commensurate with such aggrandizement of power, grandiose titles are selected to create an aura of pompousness and authority. Consider the designations in use in different departments:

Director General, Chief Commissioner, Chief Post Master General, Principal Accountant General, Attorney General, Advocate General, Comptroller and Auditor General, Inspector General, Chief Secretary, Designated Authority, Competent Authority and other high sounding titles. The subordinates attach an Assistant, Deputy, Additional, Joint to add glamour to their seats in the hierarchy of power.

Why this penchant for high sounding designations? This is a legacy of the British Raj, which sought to control and intimidate the Natives by investing Military style designations on civilian bureaucrats. This explains the use of "**General**" as a key component in different types of designations. The ordinary man would get overawed and numbed into meek submission, when confronted by such authorities. This strategy suited the British rulers, for, it served to psychologically subdue the common man.

The Police Department which plays a pivotal role in maintenance of internal security and law and order, uses powerful titles like Director General, Inspector General and Commissioner. Even subordinate officers have stern titles like Inspector. The abbreviated forms of the designations also have a menacing edge, for example: DG, IG, DIG, SI and so on. The common man is very often intimidated by such stern abbreviated designations. Would it not be more people friendly if instead of Director General of Police, it is re-designated as Protector of Law & Order?

There is a Government department which uses a friendly designation – Protector of Emigrants (POE). If every government department used such mellow designations, it

would be in keeping with democratic traditions.

If every office could display a signboard in front of its top ranking officer's room, it would boost public confidence, apart from being a people friendly measure.



Many Western countries adopt sober and soft titles like FBI Agent, Customs Agent, Director, Protector, CEO, in order to make officialdom people friendly. India also needs to examine adopting people friendly designations for its government servants.

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