

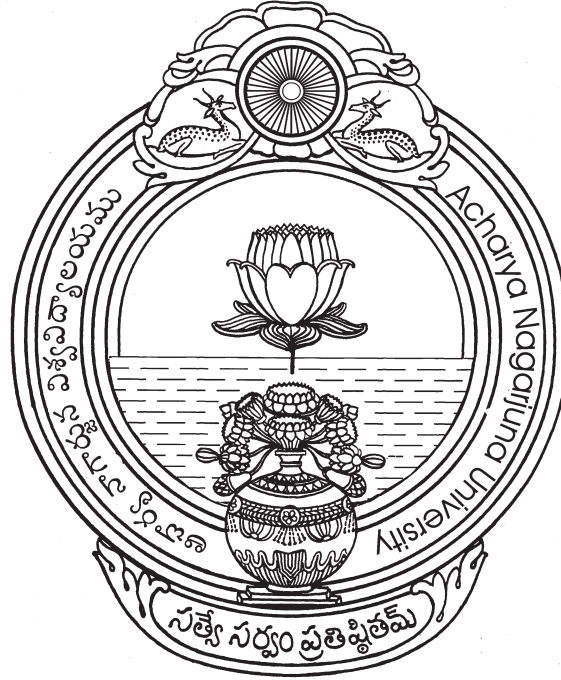
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New Village Secretariat System in Andhra Pradesh: A Boon to Local Self Government

¹Kakani Govardhan Reddy, ²Dr. Suja S. Nair & ³Dr. R. Madhumathi

Introduction

Article 243G vests powers in the State Legislatures to endow Panchayats with such powers and authority to function as institutions of self-government. As per the 73rd Amendment, AP Government enacted AP Panchayat Raj Act 1994. The Act provides for (i) the creation of three tier system of PRIs - gram panchayat at the village level, Mandal Parishad at the intermediate level and Zilla Panchayat at the district level, with required powers and functions contained in Schedule XI of the Constitution. Panchayats are responsible for preparation of plans and their execution for economic development and social justice related to 29 subjects (Annexure 1).

Before we get into the new Village Secretariat System in Andhra Pradesh, it is important for us to discuss, what is a government? Why Local Self Government? And what is the need of changes in Local Self Government?

With these questions in mind, let us now get into the details. The purpose of life of any human being is to live happily with minimum basic requirements of life like food, clothing

and shelter to everyone and to have the means to survive with these minimum basic requirements throughout their life to themselves and their family members. We find even today even after these many years of independence so many poor people without proper food, clothing and shelter? Why? Where are we going wrong? Why the governments are failing in achieving this basic objective of the government? Is it so difficult or is it some Mission Impossible in spite of bringing in so many schemes for the years together?

Here is an attempt to all these questions made in the state of Andhra Pradesh in the form introducing a new Village Secretariat System vide G.O. Ms. No. 110 of Panchayat Raj & Rural Development (MDL - I) Department dated 19-07-2019 associating it with the Village Volunteers System.

Need for Village Secretariat System:

- i. Restructuring the delivery systems to function as an effective mechanism to deliver services.

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- ii. A strong & workable channel for implementation of NAVARATHNALU (AP Governments Election Manifesto Agenda)
 - iii. Transparency and accountability in delivery of government services to the citizens
 - iv. Ensure convergence among departments providing services at village level.
- ii. Village secretariats shall assist in preparation of Gram Panchayat Development plans for 5 years on the subjects delegated to them from time to time, as per the prescribed procedure.

Objectives of the New Village Secretariat System as per the G.O. cited above include:

- i. To provide various Government / other services at the door steps of Citizens through single window system and ensure delivery of Navaratnalu.
 - ii. Enable convergence of all line departments that provide services at the Village level
 - iii. Preparation and timely implementation of village plans.
 - iv. Mapping the field level functionaries with clearly specified roles making them accountable to Gram Panchayats/Gram Sabha with a well-defined Citizen Charter.
 - v. Integrate the institution of village volunteers with village secretary at system enabling them to provide citizen services efficiently.
- iii. The functionaries of the village secretariat shall prepare integrated annual plans using the PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) techniques, duly capturing the felt needs & aspirations of the people, as per the prescribed procedure.
 - iv. Village secretariat shall Endeavour to provide services pertaining to the subjects delegated to them from time to time, as per well-defined citizen charter, being accountable to Gram Panchayats.

Trainings

Induction training for one week at district or zonal level will be given to impart basic knowledge about the functions to be discharged by Functional Assistants of Village Secretariat. General training will be imparted at PR Training Centres to equip the functionaries with following general skills: -

- Official correspondence
- Issues dealt by Village Secretariat / Volunteers and redress the grievances as per the department protocol
- Computer skills

Preparation of Gram Panchayat Development plans and provision of services by Village Secretariat

- i. The functional assistants of Village Secretariat shall participate in Gram Panchayat meetings and Gram Sabhas to

- Social and Behavioral Change & Communication skills
- Work closely with various functionaries to bring in synergy and ensure effective administration at the Secretariat level

The line departments will formulate detailed departmental training plan and implement in a phased manner without affecting the field work of the functionaries.

Job Chart and Monitoring System:

- i. A clear and comprehensive job chart with suitable business rules shall be put in place.
- ii. The performance of the Functional Assistants shall be reviewed periodically by the Mandal/ District level officers concerned and periodically submit the performance appraisal reports.
- iii. Key performance indicators (KPIs) are to be developed for each functionary by the respective line departments. An online monitoring system will be developed by RTGS for effective tracking of the performance of functionaries.
- iv. Establish systems to achieve transparency & efficiency in functioning besides proper checks & balances and supervision for providing corruption free delivery of services.
- v. Line departments shall converge their functioning with Village Secretariat at keeping proper linkages with other

departments, to act as a single unit of administration.

- vi. Horizontal and Vertical control structure should be properly formulated and made functional. Organic links must be established among various Departments and institutions.

It is very evident from the G.O. that the objectives aimed at to achieve are really very challenging. Right from recruiting the staff into the new Village Secretariat System to train them to absorb into the system, monitor properly the working of the new system, re-recruiting the staff as and when the vacancies arise. The main challenge certainly lies in socializing the newly recruited staff to have empathy towards the poor and see to it that they accomplish the objectives of the new system.

The new village secretariat system is supported by the Gram Volunteers System which came into effect vide G. O. Ms. No. 104 of Panchayat Raj & Rural Development (MDL - I) Department dated 22-06-2019. In order to operationalize

Government welfare schemes Volunteers were deployed in rural areas for delivering Government Services at door step of all eligible households irrespective of Caste/Creed/Religion/Gender and political affiliation. This system aims to ensure leak proof implementation of Government Programmes/Schemes. The objective of positioning Village Volunteers@ one per around 50 households is to ensure

timely and transparent services, to eliminate the corruption at all levels of administration. Village Volunteers will identify the problems being faced by anybody in his jurisdiction and the same will be brought to the notice of Gram Panchayat and then get them resolved.

However, doubtless to say that this is a great initiative towards filling drawbacks in the effective implementation of local self government by the Government of Andhra Pradesh. And the Village Secretariat System is only two years baby still and would be too early to decide its success or failure of the system. So the new Village Secretariat System in Andhra Pradesh we can undoubtedly say that is a Boon to Local Self Government.

Local Self Governance in the era of Globalization – A new experiment in Andhra Pradesh

We are living in the era of globalization now. What is available in USA is available everywhere including the food items. What significance the Local Self Governance has got in the era of globalization then? Yes, true we get everything but we still have backwardness.

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Annexure 1

Agriculture, including agricultural extension

Land improvement, implementation of land reforms, land consolidation and soil conservation

Animal husbandry, dairying and poultry

Fisheries

Fuel and fodder

Markets and fairs

Minor irrigation, water management and watershed development

Small scale industries including food processing industries

Khadi, village and cottage industries

Rural housing

Drinking water

Roads, culverts, bridges, ferries, waterways and other means of communication

Rural electrification, including distribution of electricity

Poverty alleviation Programme

Education, including primary and secondary schools

Technical training and vocational education

Adult and non-formal education

Libraries

Cultural activities

Health and sanitation, including hospitals, primary health centers and dispensaries

Family welfare

Women and child development

Social welfare, including welfare of the handicapped and mentally retarded

Welfare of the weaker sections, and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes

Public distribution system

Maintenance of community assets

Social forestry and farm forestry

Minor forest produce

Non-conventional energy sources