CHAPTER - 1
LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN RETROSPECT
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"Public finance primarily deals with the income and expenditure of
public authorities and with adjustment of one to the other".
Hugh Dalton

1.0 Introduction

The fact that there are 21,943 Gram Panchayats in Andhra Pradesh alone and that there are 638,365 villages (Census 2001) in India shows how deep rooted is the rural aspect of Indian culture and civilization. No wonder that India lives in villages. The culture of village festivities, dance and drama notwithstanding, its 72.22 per cent (Census 2001) of population is in rural areas. Hence, it goes without saying that the real India is rural India. The continued efforts to make villages self-sufficient begin with autonomy or ability to self rule themselves. Gram Swaraj is a term being used since the pre-independence period. The need of the hour is not dependence on bureaucracy or State Government but the ability of the village to augment its own resources and administer independently.

1.1 Emergence of Local Government

All over the world the right of people to govern themselves has accrued to them through long years of struggle. It has always been an arduous exercise to traverse from governance by autocratic decree to one by democratic dialogue. India’s fight against imperial rule is an important chapter in this journey. The acceptance of a democratic system of government, while a major achievement, is not the end of the road. Mahatma Gandhi realized this decades before the country’s independence was visible on the horizon. Democracy, to be meaningful, should empower
the weakest. It was Gandhi again who believed that India would be liberated only when power rested with the people. And he believed that this required governance at the lowest level possible, namely the village. An over centralized structure was to him a symbol of oppression. While calling for a struggle against British rule he also drew attention to these vast questions which free India would confront.

Gandhi's inspiration in the realm of decentralization was derived from the institution of the Panchayat in ancient India. His vision is best reflected in his own words: "the Government of the village will be conducted by a Panchayat of five persons annually elected by the adult villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. This will have all the authority and jurisdiction required. Since there will be no system of punishment in the accepted sense, this Panchayat will be legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year of office. Any village can become such a republic today without much interference even from the present government whose sole effective connection with the village is the exaction of the village revenue".

It was almost entirely due to Gandhi's insistence that the constitution of India contains a provision in Art. 40. One of the Directive Principles of State Policy is that: "The State shall take steps to organize village Panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self government" (Article 40, Constitution of India).
1.1.1 Local Government in Pre-independence India

Prior to independence some attempts were made to decentralize power to lower levels. They were of course not comprehensive or far reaching but they are important in the evolution of institution of local government. Starting from Lord Rippon's measures in 1882 several provinces and princely states initiated steps, halting and tentative though, to decentralize.

1.1.2 Balwantrai Mehta Committee Report

Policies which were evolving at the national level also exercised their own impact on developments in the State. The report of the Balwantrai Mehta Committee (1957) marked a significant phase and heralded the birth of Panchayat Raj.

1.1.3 The Concept of Local Self-Government

Local self-government is an integral and inalienable part of a democratic government. It completes the three-tier system of a country's federal governmental structure, that is, sovereign national government, quasi-sovereign state governments, and infra-sovereign local governments, all three working as “partners in the great enterprise of securing a decent level of existence for all the nation's citizens”. Local self-government, created by a national or state enactment, acts as an agent of development and provides certain services of immense importance to the people living under its jurisdiction, with a strong emphasis on popular initiative and participation.
In modern society the concern of a government has broadened to cover not only the maintenance of law and order but also the promotion of the welfare of the whole community. This has enormously increased the scope of the functions and activities of the government. A large number of such functions are of a local nature and can best be performed by local governments only, as they cannot be successfully undertaken at a state or national level. Local governments are assigned the task of performing these functions and providing a large number of social services from womb to tomb. These local authorities supervise, direct, control and provide for all citizens a common minimum health, education, welfare services, roads, peace and security and beauty of environment. The local government relieves the overworked higher-tier government of many responsibilities. Besides, a local government is found to be the most economical means of managing affairs at that level.

1.1.4 Decentralization

It is necessary that there should be devolution of power and a decentralization of machinery and that such power be exercised and such machinery be controlled and directed by popular representatives of local area. Decentralization results in increased operational efficiency as it evokes local interest and excites local initiative in the field of development. Centralization promotes remote and absentee control and also keeps the people of the administration. Moreover, every centralized system has the possibilities of a speedy decay and, without a broad base, must, in spite of its apparent strength, collapse under its own weight. Comparing the two,
decentralization is definitely a better mode of governance. Local self-governments are important means of achieving decentralization of political power and promoting democratic values.

1.2.1 Local Government Finances in India: A Search for Alternatives

In the course of history the institutions of rural local self-governance, referred as Panchayat Raj institutions in India, have seen many ups and downs in the quest for survival. The fate of these bodies' remains linked to the role perception of the government in the sphere of development. The system of centralized planning in the era of liberalization and restructuring of the economy is being reviewed in the new perspectives and efforts are being made to reduce its direct involvement in developmental activities. The Ninth Plan envisages that the government will play the role of a facilitator by creating the right type of institutional infrastructure, particularly in rural areas. In the perspective of reorienting the role of government and reducing its direct involvement in social and economic activities, local bodies are being seen as the agencies that can pick up such functions.

The fortunes of Panchayat Raj have possibly suffered because of the partial and instrumental way that they have been perceived by the policy makers. The objectives of the local institutions have been perceived more often within the functional perspective of fulfilling the national plan objectives and rarely within the broad framework of expanding and defending democratic values in the countryside. This distorted emphasis is
not only the product of perceptions of the governing elite but also the consequences of political changes in the country.

The urge to establish democratically elected local self-governments was a vital strategic element in the struggle for national independence. For Gandhi, *Panchayat Raj* was an instrument of mass politics for a network of such organizations functioning in the village without any connection with the government for building the true foundation of civil revolt. Gandhi viewed the *Panchayats* as instruments to undermine the British authority in rural India and usher in an alternative political and economic philosophy of development. After independence, *Panchayats* in the Gandhian perspective were located in his philosophy of restructuring the government and economic activities. They provided substance to the concept of village autonomy in the political and economic field and were seen as instruments of a democratic system of governance.

The economic philosophy of Gandhi was closely intertwined with his political proposals of restructuring the government but, when the Indian Constitution was adopted, Gandhian views were considered outside the realm of practical political politics and were not incorporated into the Constitution. While there was appreciation of values of humanitarianism and non-violence, the Constitution was federal parliamentary in structure with a pronounced bias towards centralization. Some thinkers referred that as quasi-federal. This bias was further accentuated over the years by a widely shared concern to make the nation strong both politically as well as
economically. It made the individual and not the village as the basic unit of the political system. As a concession to the advocates of the Panchayat Raj, the Constitution included in its Directive Principles of State Policy that the state shall take steps to organize village Panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self government. Thus, within the Constitution itself the idea of Panchayats becoming building blocks for a new Indian polity was given up. The Panchayat system was not accepted as an alternative form of political and economic organization.

Panchayat Raj was revived in another form after the recommendations of the Balwantrai Mehta Committee were accepted. The Community Development Programme had been introduced in 1952. The organizational structure designed to implement it provided for the flow of power and control from the top to the bottom making the machinery devised to implement a Programme of people's mobilization into hierarchic bureaucratic organization. Communication and power flowed from the central level to the state level and a variegated district administration was established at three levels of district, block and village. There was a remarkable expansion in the local development bureaucracy that now consisted of block development officers, subject matter extension officers and village level workers. For the first time, multiple bureaucratic cadres emerged at the block levels above the district. A bureaucratic network with long lines of hierarchy and communication began to unfold itself.
During the First Five Year Plan, in order to revitalize and bring out socio-economic and cultural transformation in the countryside, a massive Community Development Programme was launched, during the First Five Year Plan, throughout the country on October 2, 1952 on an experimental basis with 55 Community Development Schemes to revitalize and bring out socio-economic and cultural transformation in rural areas. As it was widely accepted, the scheme was extended throughout the country on October 2, 1953 under the name of National Extension Service. This Programme intended (1) to increase employment and production in agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, fisheries by adopting scientific methods, and by establishing village and cottage industries; (2) to promote self-help, self-reliance and co-operation; and (3) to harness optimal utilization of resources in villages.

In subsequent years, the Community Development experiment did not yield desired results, because peoples' participation was not forthcoming. Several reviews of these initiatives testify this phenomenon of people's indifference.

The Government of India appointed a study team under the chairmanship of Balwantrai Mehta in January 1957, to study and report on the failures of Community Development Programme and National Extension Service and also to suggest measures for speedy development of rural areas. The team observed that progress could not be achieved without divesting power and entrusting responsibility. "Community development can be real
only when the community understands its problems, realizes its responsibilities, exercises the power through its chosen representatives and maintains a constant and intelligent vigilance on local administration", the Team opined.

In order to achieve the above objectives, the Balwantrai Mehta Committee recommended three tier *Panchayat Raj* System with *Gram Panchayats* at village level (bottom tier), *Panchayat Samitis* at block level (middle tier) and *Zilla Parishads* at district level (top tier). The recommendation of the Committee came into force on April 1, 1958 and was first introduced in Rajasthan on October 2, 1959. Andhra Pradesh followed suit, and later it was introduced in almost all states. Different states adopted different tier system (i.e. three tier, two tier, one tier) according to their convenience.

With a view to revive the *Panchayat Raj* institutions, Government of India appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Ashok Mehta. The Committee, after evaluation of the *Panchayat Raj* System concluded that the story of *Panchayat Raj* has been a story of ups and downs and has passed through three phases - the phase of ascendancy (1959-64), the phase of stagnation (1964-69), and the phase of decline (1969-77). In its report, the Committee mentioned that *Panchayat Raj* has been weakened due to certain adverse factors. The main recommendations of the Committee were:

1) Effective devolution of powers to *Panchayat Raj* should take place.
2) Primary unit in Panchayat Raj System should be Zilla Parishad and not the Panchayat Samiti, as the Parishad has better leadership and resources (administrative and financial) to play a substantial development role.

3) Another institution called Mandal Panchayat with appropriate powers and resources and covering a smaller area than development block and larger one than village Panchayat, should replace the Panchayat Samiti and the Panchayat, as it would be more effective in management of development schemes.

4) Administrative wing of Zilla Praja Parishad in particular and also that of Mandal Panchayat, should be suitably staffed and appropriately led by well-qualified senior civil servants.

5) Below the Mandal Panchayat, there should be village committee including weaker sections of people, to perform functions allocated to it by the Mandal Panchayat.

6) In order to bring appropriate co-ordination between rural development and urban development, municipal bodies should have representation in Zilla Parishad and Mandal Panchayat.

7) Political parties should take part in elections to Panchayat Raj and participate in its working as this would energise it and make it more coherent in working.
8) For improving the capabilities and reorienting the attitudes of people's representatives, as well as, bureaucracy within *Panchayat Raj*, a massive Programme of education and training should be set up in place of the existing limited one.

But the recommendations of the Committee could not see the light of the day as the Central Government did not pay serious attention to its recommendations. However, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka took steps to revitalise *Panchayat Raj* keeping the *Zilla Praja Parishad* as the most important level and delegating substantial powers and functions to *Panchayat Raj* institutions.

In 1985, the Planning Commission set up a committee under the chairmanship of Prof. G.V.K. Rao, to review the existing administrative arrangements for rural development and poverty alleviation Programmes. This Committee strongly recommended revival of *Panchayat Raj* institutions, giving planning function also to them. The Committee recommended the creation of District Development Committee with higher status than that of the District Collector to look after and co-ordinate all the developmental activities in the district.

In June 1986, the Government of India set up a Committee under the chairmanship of L.M. Singhvi to prepare a concept paper on the revitalization of *Panchayat Raj* institutions. The Committee recommended that the local self-government should be constitutionally recognized, protected and preserved through inclusion of a new chapter in the Indian
Constitution. It also suggested constitutional machinery to ensure regular and fair elections to Panchayat Raj institutions.

Between 1987 and 1988, several workshops of District Magistrates were organised at different places in the country on "Responsive Administration". The workshops recommended that a democratic framework at the local level was indispensable for responsive administration. Towards the end of 1988, a sub-committee of the Consultative Committee of Parliament, under the chairmanship of P.K. Thungon, recommended constitutional status to the Panchayat Raj System in India. The Government of India brought in the Constitution (64th Amendment) Bill, which was passed by the Lok Sabha on August 10, 1989.

It was a comprehensive bill concerning vital aspects of Panchayat Raj institutions including:

- the constitution of a uniform three-tier Panchayat Raj system at the village, intermediate and district levels in all the states and union territories having a population of not less than 20 lakhs;

- reservation of seats to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women;

- guaranteed term of five years to the Panchayat Raj institutions at all levels and election within six months of dissolutions ahead of schedule;
specific powers, authority and responsibility to the Panchayat Raj institutions;

addition of a new Schedule (XI Schedule) to the Constitution indicating an illustrative list of subjects, and the functions which could be entrusted to the Panchayat

conduct of election to the Panchayats by the Election Commission.

Although, the Lok Sabha passed the bill, it was defeated by the Rajya Sabha.

In 1990, the issues relating to the strengthening of the Panchayat Raj institutions were considered afresh. It was brought up before Conference of Chief Ministers held in June 1990, presided by the then Prime Minister. The Conference endorsed the proposals for the introduction of a fresh Constitution Amendment Bill. Consequently, the Constitution (74th Amendment) Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha on September 7, 1990. This Bill, however, lapsed due to dissolution of Lok Sabha.

In 1991, the matter was considered once again. The Constitution (72nd Amendment) Bill was introduced on September 16, 1991, which was subsequently referred to a Joint Select Committee of Parliament in December, 1991 for a detailed examination. The Joint Committee presented its report to the Parliament in July, 1992. The Constitution (72nd Amendment) Bill was finally passed by the Lok Sabha on December 22, 1992 and by the Rajya Sabha on December 23, 1992. Seventeen states
ratified the Act in a record time. The President of India accorded his assent on April 20, 1993 and the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 came into effect on April 24, 1993.

The Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act provides for establishment of three-tier Panchayat Raj System in rural local self-governments. It also contains provisions regarding regular elections to Panchayat bodies, setting up of State Election Commission and a State Finance Commission, reservation for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women, enabling provision for reservation for Backward Classes. Adequate powers and responsibilities will have to be devolved upon these institutions at appropriate levels, to enable them to prepare and implement the scheme for economic development and social justice. The Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 is definitely a positive step to revive the old institution with a presumption that power to people can pave the way:

1) to lead the third stratum of Government,

2) to help Panchayat to retain the image of institution, and

3) to translate the dream of grassroots level democracy into reality.

To achieve this not only decentralization of power has been rationalized by law but an opportunity is provided to people for active participation in formulation and execution of plans and also monitoring progress at the local level.
The salient features of the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Bill are:

i. A three-tier *Panchayat Raj* institutions should be introduced uniformly.

ii. Direct elections at the village level to *Gram Panchayats*, and indirect elections at the block and district levels should be held.

iii. Elected chairperson of a *Gram Panchayat* can be removed by a specially convened *Gram Sabha* by a two-third majority of the members present in the meeting, and having presence of at least fifty percent members of *Gram Sabha*.

iv. Seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes will be reserved separately.

v. One third of seats will be reserved for women.

vi. *Panchayat Raj* institutions should have duration of five years.

vii. Disqualification for member of *Panchayat Raj* institutions will be similar to the method adopted in respect of disqualification for Member of Parliament and State Legislatures.

viii. Depending upon population of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, the Chairpersons will be reserved for them. Also reservation will be made for women to chair the *Panchayats*. 
ix. Minimum age for a person who intends to hold an office in the Panchayat Raj institutions, is fixed at 21 years.

x. Elections in the Panchayat Raj institutions should be held under the direction of Chief Election Officer of a State and the Chief Election Commissioner.

xi. Panchayat Raj institutions will have power, authority and responsibilities to function as instruments of self-government. Plans for economic development and social justice schemes for their implementation may be prepared by the Panchayat Raj institutions.

xii. Panchayat Raj institutions will have power to impose taxes, duties, tolls and fees to raise funds for development Programmes.

xiii. The state would constitute a Finance Commission to review the financial position of the Panchayats.

xiv. Necessary legal safeguards will be provided for smooth functioning of the Panchayat Raj institutions.

In accordance with the provision of the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act 1992, all the states in the country enacted their new Panchayat Raj Acts.

1.2.2 Panchayat Raj in Andhra Pradesh

Andhra Pradesh was formed as a separate state on linguistic basis in November 1956, by merging nine Telugu speaking districts of old Hyderabad
State and with the eleven districts of Andhra State. Andhra Pradesh, along with Rajasthan, introduced the system of *Panchayat Raj* based on the recommendations made by Balwantrai Mehta Committee. Accepting all the recommendations at length, Andhra Pradesh adopted the three-tier *Panchayat Raj* System consisting of *Gram Panchayat* at lower tier, *Panchayat Samitis* at middle tier and *Zilla Praja Parishads* at the top tier.

Subsequently, during the Telugu Desam Government under the Chief Ministership of N.T. Rama Rao, Andhra Pradesh Government brought about reforms in *Panchayat Raj* as well as revenue administration by introducing *Mandal* system, in order to achieve democratic decentralization and to bring administration to the door step of the people. As such, the earlier Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Samitis and *Zilla Parishads* Act, 1959 was replaced by the Andhra Pradesh Mandal Praja *Parishads, Zilla Praja Parishads* and Zilla Pranalika Abhivrudhi Sameeksha Mandals Act, 1986 (Act No. 31 of 1986). Accordingly the three-tier system comprises of *Gram Panchayats, Mandal Praja Parishads* and *Zilla Praja Parishads*, came into force by replacing *Gram Panchayats, Block Panchayats* and *Zilla Parishads*.

1.2.2.1 *Zilla Parishads*

A *Zilla Praja Parishad* can be constituted for each district through a notification issued by the State Government. A *Zilla Praja Parishad* consists of the following members:

a) Member elected from territorial constituency, which obviously is a *Mandal*
b) Members of Legislative Assembly of the State representing constituency, which forms part or whole of the district concerned

c) Member of the Council of State who is a registered voter in the district

d) Two members each belonging to minorities\(^5\) and co-opted by the elected members of the *Zilla Praja Parishad*.

The permanent invitees to the meetings of the *Zilla Praja Parishads* are:

a) Chairman, District Co-operative Marketing Society;

b) Chairman, *Zilla Grandhalaya Samstha*;

c) Chairman, District Co-operative Central Bank;

d) District Collector; and

e) All Presidents of *Mandal Parishads* in the District.

All the permanent invitees are entitled to participate in the meetings of the *Zilla Parishad* without the right to vote.
1.2.2.2 Reservations of Seats

Seats are reserved for the election of members from different territorial constituencies on different social break-up.

a) Seats are reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in proportion to their population to total population and by rotation.

b) One third seats are reserved for persons belonging to Backward Classes.

c) One third seats reserved and allocated for women belonging to the respective classes and by rotation.

d) Not less than one third of the seats should be reserved for Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and Back Ward Class women.

The Chairman of the Zilla Parishad is elected by the directly elected members of the Zilla Parishad. The principle of reservation in respect of the election to the office of Chairman, Zilla Parishad is followed in the manner prescribed above.

1.2.2.3 Standing Committees

There are seven standing committees in the Zilla Praja Parishad to perform different developmental activities. The Chairman, Zilla Praja Parishad is the ex-officio member of all the standing committees. The
members of different standing committees are nominated by the Chairman. The standing committees are:

1. Standing Committee for Planning and Finance
2. Standing Committee for Rural Development
3. Standing Committee for Agriculture
4. Standing Committee for Education and Medical Services
5. Standing Committee for Women’s Welfare
7. Standing Committee for Works.

1.2.2.4 Mandal Parishad

A territorial unit with 20 to 30 villages, covering a population between 35,000 and 50,000 constitutes a Mandal. In every Mandal headquarters, a primary health center, veterinary hospital, high school, junior college, police station, library and market yard were established, to provide all facilities to people in one place.

A Mandal Parishad consists of the following members:

a) Members elected from territorial constituencies

b) Members of Legislative Assembly representing a constituency, which comprises either whole or part of the Mandal concerned

c) Member of the Council of State who is a registered voter in a Mandal (ex- officio)
d) One member each belonging to minorities and co-opted by the elected members

e) Sarpanches of Gram Panchayats as permanent invitees.

For the purpose of electing members from territorial constituencies, each constituency consists of population between 3,000 and 4,000 persons.

1.2.2.5 Gram Panchayat

Basing on the revenue, Gram Panchayats are divided into notified Gram Panchayats and non-notified Gram Panchayats. Gram Panchayats with income of more than Rs. 60,000 are categorized as notified Gram Panchayats, those less than Rs. 60,000 are called as non-notified Gram Panchayats.

1.2.2.6 Constitution of the Gram Panchayat


1.2.2.7 Gram Sabha

Gram Sabha is the only institution which reflects and resembles direct democracy in India. As per the Act, there should be a ‘Gram Sabha’ for every Gram Panchayat comprising all persons whose names are included in the electoral role. Gram Sabha should meet at least twice in a year and be presided over by the Sarpanch.
The functions of *Gram Sabha* include:

i) Annual statement of accounts and audit reports

ii) Report on the administration of the preceding year

iii) Programmes of works for the year or new Programmes not covered by budget or the annual Programmes

iv) Proposals for fresh taxation or for enhancement of existing tax rates

v) Selection of schemes, beneficiaries and locations

vi) Such other matter as may be prescribed.

The *Gram Panchayat* shall give due consideration to suggestions, if any, of the *Gram Sabha*.

### 1.2.2.8 Panchayat

The most important body at village level is 'Panchayat' which, by virtue of Act, is conferred with administrative powers. *Gram Panchayat* consists of elected members inclusive of its *Sarpanch*. Its strength varies between 5 to 21, based on the population. Table 1.1 shows population and composition of members.
Table- 1.1

Table Showing Number of Members in Gram Panchayats in Andhra Pradesh

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Number of members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Up to 300</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Exceeding 300 but not exceeding 500</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Exceeding 500 but not exceeding 1,500</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Exceeding 1500 but not exceeding 3,000</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Exceeding 3000 but not exceeding 5,000</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Exceeding 5,000 but not exceeding 10,000</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Exceeding 10,000 but not exceeding 15,000</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Exceeding 15,000</td>
<td>between 19 and 21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, 1994

The members of the Panchayat including Sarpanch are directly elected by the registered voters by secret ballot, for a period of 5 years. There is reservation of seats for members belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes and women. Sarpanch is the political executive of Gram Panchayat and is assisted by Upa-Sarpanch.

1.2.2.9 Bureaucracy

Notified Gram Panchayats are provided with an Executive Officer assisted by supporting staff. Executive Officer is expected to execute developmental activities besides regular administration. In non-notified Gram Panchayats, elected Sarpanch acts as an executive with the help of a clerk-cum-bill collector.
1.3.1 Gram Panchayats in Andhra Pradesh

In Andhra Pradesh, there are 23 districts comprising of 1091 Mandals with 21,943 Gram Panchayats. Table 1.2 shows the district-wise Gram Panchayats in Andhra Pradesh.

Table-1.2

Table Showing District-Wise Gram Panchayats in Andhra Pradesh (As on 31-3-1999)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>No. of Census villages &amp; Towns covered by Gram Panchayats &amp; Other Towns</th>
<th>No. of Gram Panchayats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Srikakulam</td>
<td>1,842</td>
<td>1,112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Vizianagaram</td>
<td>1,533</td>
<td>930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Visakhapatnam</td>
<td>3,213</td>
<td>974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>East Godavari</td>
<td>1,396</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>West Godavari</td>
<td>894</td>
<td>887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Krishna</td>
<td>993</td>
<td>971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Guntur</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>1,027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Prakasam</td>
<td>1,092</td>
<td>1,045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Nellore</td>
<td>1,188</td>
<td>968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Chittoor</td>
<td>1,534</td>
<td>1,425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Cuddapah</td>
<td>965</td>
<td>841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Anantapur</td>
<td>968</td>
<td>1,003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Kurnool</td>
<td>925</td>
<td>897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Mahbubnagar</td>
<td>1,555</td>
<td>1,351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Ranga Reddy</td>
<td>941</td>
<td>706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Hyderabad</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Medak</td>
<td>1,264</td>
<td>1,060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Nizamabad</td>
<td>922</td>
<td>718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Adilabad</td>
<td>1,741</td>
<td>866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Karimnagar</td>
<td>1,097</td>
<td>1,195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Warangal</td>
<td>1,076</td>
<td>1,016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Khammam</td>
<td>1,237</td>
<td>774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Nalgonda</td>
<td>1,155</td>
<td>1,177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>ANDHRA PRADESH</strong></td>
<td><strong>28,264</strong></td>
<td><strong>21,943</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Officials Records of Commissionerate of Panchayat Raj, Hyderabad.
1.3.2 Gram Panchayat – Functions

The Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act 1994, governs the Gram Panchayats in Andhra Pradesh. According to this Act, Gram Panchayats perform two sets of functions: obligatory and optional. Besides these functions, Gram Panchayats have to discharge some other functions as agent of Central or State Government.

1.3.2.1 Functions – Obligatory

There are several basic amenities or services which are covered under the Obligatory Functions as follows:

1) The construction, repair and maintenance of all buildings, public roads, bridges, roads, dams and causeways in the Gram Panchayat

2) The lighting of public roads and public places

3) The construction of drains and their maintenance, disposal of drainage water and sewage

4) The cleaning of streets, removal of rubbish heaps, jungle growth and prickly pear, filling in of the disused wells, sanitary measures in ponds, pools, ditches, pits or hollows and other improvements of the sanitary conditions of the village

5) The provision of public latrines, and arrangements to clean latrines, public or private

6) The opening and maintenance of cremation and burial ground and the disposal of unclaimed dead bodies of human beings or animals
7) Preventive and remedial measures connected with any epidemic or with malaria

8) Sinking and repairing of wells, excavation, repair and maintenance of ponds or tanks and construction and maintenance of water works, supply of water for washing and bathing purposes and for protected water for drinking purposes

9) The conservation of manorial resources, preparation of compost and sale of manure

10) The registration of births and deaths

11) The establishment and maintenance of cattle ponds

12) All other matters declared as obligatory by or under this Act of 1994.

1.3.2.2 Functions – Optional

1) The construction and maintenance of dharmasalas and rest houses for travellers

2) The planting and preservation of groves and trees on the side of roads and other public places

3) The promotion and development of pre-primary education, elementary education, social and health education, cottage industries and trades

4) The establishment and maintenance of dispensaries and the payment of subsidies to rural medical practitioners
5) The establishment and maintenance of wireless receiving sets, play
grounds, clubs and other centers of recreation and physical culture

6) The establishment and maintenance of libraries and reading rooms

7) The provision of relief to the crippled, the destitute and the sick

8) The establishment and maintenance of nurseries and stores of
improved seeds and agricultural implements, production and
distribution of improved seeds, pesticides and insecticides, and the
holding of agricultural shows including cattle shows

9) The propagation of improved methods of cultivation in the village
including laying of demonstration plots with a view to increasing
production

10) The encouragement of co-operative management of lands in the
village and the organization of joint co-operative farming; the
production of co-operative farming; and promotion of co-operatives for
manufacture of bricks, tiles, hinges, doors, windows, rafters or other
building materials as provided in the village housing project scheme
sponsored by the Central Government

11) The establishment and maintenance of warehouses and
granaries

12) The establishment and maintenance of cattle sheds

13) The extension of village sites
14) The improvement of cattle including purchase and maintenance of stud bulls and provision of veterinary relief

15) The control of fairs, Jataras and festivals

16) The organization of voluntary labour for community development works in the village

17) The establishment and maintenance of maternity and child-welfare centers

18) The organization of watch and ward

19) The provision of relief against famine or other calamities

20) The destruction of stray and ownerless pigs

21) The preparation of statistics of unemployment

22) The opening and maintenance of public markets

23) The opening and maintenance public slaughter houses

24) The implementation of land reform measures in the village including consolidation of holdings and soil conservation

25) The setting up of organization to promote good and social harmony between different communities, the removal of untouchability, the provision of house sites for Harijans, the eradication of corruption, the prohibition or temperance in the consumption of intoxicating drinks or drugs which are injurious to health and the discouragement of gambling and litigation
Other measures of public utility concerned to promote the safety, health and convenience, comfort or moral, social and material well being of the residents of the village.

1.4 Conclusion

Further, the Gram Panchayat as an agent has to implement the State or Central Government Programmes. Of these functions, Gram Panchayat has to take-up the obligatory functions on top priority. After performing the obligatory functions, the Gram Panchayat may take up some are all optional functions, subject to its resources and local needs. There are no hard and fast rules laid down in the Act regarding the functions. In Andhra Pradesh, Gram Panchayats are allowed freedom to choose functions. The local needs and urgency will set priorities for the Gram Panchayats. Gram Panchayats also consider the public opinion and Government approval while taking up the functions. A general observation is that Gram Panchayats are weighed by increasing number of functions. But, inadequacy of resources is the hurdle. Lack of effective leadership, organizational draw backs and people’s apathy pose a serious impediment to Gram Panchayats’ effective functioning.
Notes


4. Ibid.

5. Minorities such as Muslims, Christians etc.,