



For the favour of publication

Ten questions addressed to the Government of Karnataka which has taken a decision to postpone the Grama Panchayat Elections

Grama Panchayat Hakkottaya Andolana
14-05-2020

1. The State Government has taken a position that it is impossible to conduct elections for the Grama Panchayats now. When it has been possible to provide rations and essential services, as well as to reopen factories in the villages now, why is it not possible to conduct panchayat elections? Has the Government forgotten the recommendations related to conducting Grama Panchayat elections in a simple, effective and inexpensive manner, provided by the Review Committee for the amendments of Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act, which was set up under the chairpersonship of Sri Ramesh Kumar?
2. Is the decision to postpone the elections linked to the limitations the present situation may place on unchecked flow of money, on political machination, on extravagant campaigns and on voter enticements?
3. Is the Government not aware that prior to the announcement about the appointment of either an administrator or an administrative committee in the place of the elected government, the justification for not holding elections has been proven beyond doubt as genuine? Or is this a convenient lapse of memory?
4. It is often said, in relation to the Grama Panchayat members, that 'if they fail to ride the horse that is given to them, it shows their lack of courage'. Those who frequently paid lip-service to grama panchayats as 'self-governments' and urged them to fulfill their responsibilities are now supporting the move to ride a horse stealthily. Could such rough-riding of power be considered just or democratic in practice?
5. It is only just that there is a local government that is elected by the people, as adult franchise is a fundamental right of citizens in a democracy. Does it not endanger democracy when the rights of the citizens are curbed and instead of a government they elect, they have administrators or an administrative

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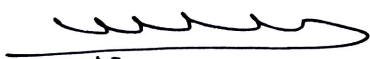
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committee that has no mandate from the constituency thrust on them? The administrators or administrative committees so appointed, are they not likely to function favorably to those who appoint them, instead of being accountable to the citizens they are meant to serve?

6. The central and the state governments which are self-congratulating themselves for reaching the benefits of their schemes and programmes to 'the last mile' during the challenging times of Covid, are they not aware that it is the untiring efforts of the local governments that have made such extensive reach possible?
7. During the crisis situation created due to Corona, hundreds of Panchayats have collaborated with local organisations and donors to respond to the trials and tribulations of their citizens. In such a challenging situation, replacement of these 'corona warriors' who have been highly responsible, accountable, elected local governments, with an administrator or a committee – does it not appear to be a tactic to centralise governance?
8. The various administrators who are presently under work pressure, are they not likely to be unable to respond to the real and pressing needs of the people and cause further deterioration of the already precarious situation?
9. As those who repeatedly uphold the Sharana philosophy and the philosophy of the dynamic 'Jangama' as the ideal, from the local to the national level, is democratic decentralisation not apparent as an embodiment of the Janagama philosophy? Does this move to uproot it and replace it with the static not feel like a glaring contradiction between what is preached and what is practiced?
10. In the present situation, there appears to be an urgency to rush to appoint an administrator or an administrative committee without critical deliberations or consultations about the pros and cons of the decision. Does this not raise doubts whether this move intends to protect vested interests of certain individuals or is linked to party politics of those in power?

With best regards,



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On behalf of Grama Panchayath Hakkottaya Andolana

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