

Abstract:

Pragati Nagar is a social, economic, physical ecosystem designed by a group of leaders with the intention of the holistic wellness of people creating a model town near Hyderabad. It is a village with urban amenities and infrastructure – it has cement roads, green platforms, lawns, and road dividers, all well planned by a set of people from the former State public sector unit, Hyderabad Allwyn Ltd privatized by the state government in the Year 1996-98. Every person in the town has access to education, safe drinking water, swimming pool, secondary health care, prayer halls for all major faiths and modern gymnasium. The urban village has banned the sale of alcohol, gutka and cool drinks and usage of plastics in the village.

The genesis of the urban village is unique. The idea of the formation of a housing committee to provide a stable living condition to the employees has taken seed around 1991. At the same time, the union leaders were fighting the Allwyn management to take over and run the factory on a co-operative basis, since the management was planning to close the organization due to continued losses to core between (1992-94).

The visionary for the project is Mr. D. Dayakar Reddy with his team, who wanted to create a community with a difference, cost effective civil amenities, value based, transparent, consensus decision making and one which is future proofed. Pragati Nagar is the only Panchayat in the country to have obtained ISO9001:2000 and ISO14001:2004 and be identified nationally as a model village during 1997-2018. This model village is an example of Self-Governance of the highest order creating a self-sufficient Urban village economy in India, lead by a winning team and a democratic leader.

History of Formation of Pragati Nagar:

Foreseeing the privatization move of Hyderabad Allwyn Ltd by the state Government during the 1990s which may likely affect the livelihood of workmen, Mr. D. Dayakar Reddy had planned to establish a housing colony for the employees. Ninety percent of the workers had no permanent residence. The first step of the project was to find a better residential place to construct the houses. He examined 60 different places of various localities in and around Hyderabad and selected the present location after reaching consensus with his team. They purchased 80 acres of land where a square yard cost then rupees Rs.110. In the Year 1991, the enrolment of housing members commenced among workers, supervisors & officers of Hyderabad Allwyn Ltd. A separate committee in the name of “Allwyn employees co-operative house building society has been formed, and its Governing body and executive body was elected by all the members of the housing society” The committee was headed by Mr. D. Dayakar Reddy and some other of his main team had taken the responsibility of seeing this project through to completion.

The place bought lacked all the basic facilities and had connectivity challenges. The piece of land was on the other side of a lake and had no bridge or roads to connect to the closest town. The team had to hire buses to go around the lake and reach the site for the purposes of the construction initially, after which the bridge was built to make the commute easy and accessible. There were no trees and the area was filled with huge piles of rocks, the committee planted numerous trees which now made the colony a green space.

Initially the workmen planned to buy the plots allotted to them and were not interested in construction of houses. Strong leadership of Mr. D. Dayakar Reddy and meaningful mentoring of Satyanarayana garu, a plan was worked out and three model houses were offered to the members. It has been decided that the land cost of each plot to be paid from the provident fund of the employees administered by Employee Fund Organization and from their savings, if any. Seven hundred and twenty-five employees (Allwyn Workers, Supervisors and officers) opted for the construction of the houses. All the housing members and the workmen were allocated plots based on the lottery system conducted at the open meeting with all the members. As planned the team handed over the completed houses to all those who paid the installments and the project was completed in Jan 1994, and Mr. Dayakar Reddy and his team named this colony as “PRAGATHI NAGAR”.

Project Housing and Execution:

A project team was formed to overlook the construction which was referred to as the housing committee and they decided to take up construction by themselves due to the high prices and margins in the market at that time. They gave contracts to local masons and collaborated with engineers from Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University to design the construction process. Cement bricks were fabricated at the construction site which made quality control easy and saved transport costs. The wood required was purchased by visiting different parts of Andhra Pradesh, North Eastern States and Bhutan and teak wood was purchased at 50% less than market price.

The original cost of the construction was two hundred rupees per square feet and the actual cost turned out to be one hundred eighty-five rupees. This provided a surplus of five million rupees and this was declared in an open meeting and was returned to the Members. A small group of twelve members and the seven hundred families advocated the idea of self-governance for the benefit of all and voluntarily accepted simplicity as a way of life. Being a town situated on the outskirts of the city 2.5 kms from GHMC, it is prone to thefts and hence community policing was taken up by the residents themselves. For every two months, each resident patrolled the community for one night. If they couldn't make it, a fine of fifty rupees was levied and it is paid to the person who takes up the duty. Due to this the police station registered very few thefts during a period of five years.

Birth of Local Governance:

After the return of the money to the members or House owners, the accounts were made public and can be inspected by every member. This extraordinary transparency ensured appreciation of everyone. The place occupied by the housing colony was 80 acres. However, the message of its success spread across the village and today it is populated to the extent of 850 acres. Once the housing project was completed and people started reposing confidence in the leadership of Dayakar Reddy, he wanted to establish civic amenities and wanted to provide these services through local governance. Initially the village was attached to Bachupally Gram panchayat for all the administrative purposes. Identifying the need for better governance with the help of Mr. T. DevendraGoud, one of the Ministers in the Government of Andhra Pradesh, Pragati Nagar became a Gram Panchayat with the untiring efforts of Dayakar Reddy and his team. The first elections were held on 12.02.1997. Seven out of eight ward members from the team of Dayakar Reddy have won the elections and the first decisions and objectives of the team were to ban:

- Smoking in public places
- Liquor shops in the village
- Gutka selling in shops
- Beggary

People's Progress Trust Formation and Activities:

Once the Handing over of houses was completed, Mr. D. Dayakar Reddy and his team decided to make education and health services available to the residents of Pragathi nagar. With this main objective "People's Progress Trust" was formed in the year 1995. It was registered as a charitable Organization with the main objectives of providing education, health and an old age home to support the residents as well as the underprivileged parts of the society.

Education plays a crucial role in the growth and development of an individual. A home where at-least one member is educated can change the future of that whole family. Seventy two years after independence, although the country has been moving forward in the fields of science, technology and economics, a significant section of the backward and the oppressed classes of the society still don't have access to a quality and value filled education. Since its establishment in 1995, People's Progress Trust, has been supporting the downtrodden, poor and forgotten sections of families and students with free access to quality and English medium education.

People's Nest is a boarding hostel that was established in 2012-2013 to support the students from all over the state from very remote places, with a system based on merit - by providing free education, accommodation and health care. The People's Nest is run by a network of dedicated individuals including trained and

experienced teachers and care takers with focus on great principles and values. The students here are taught to be independent and help with running the Nest under the guidance of administrators. The classrooms, residential areas, lunch area, etc. are all maintained by the students. This kind of involvement acquaints students with the value in dignity of labor.

The students are given a healthy lifestyle and nutritious food involving leafy greens, fresh vegetables, eggs, meat and fruits and high quality brown rice. The food and the healthy routine helps both their physical and mental well-being. With the help of People's hospital founded in 2007-08) all the students are provided with health services and medical care when needed. To inculcate the habit of learning and reading, a library sourced with books ranging from science, technology, social and cultural views is available and maintained by the students. To learn more about local culture and importance of the places around them they are taken on tours and visitations to various local areas. The People's Progress Trust works with an objective of imbibing a secular thought process in the students without a bias or divide in the name of caste, religion, region and gender. The students here are taught that the power to change their future and thereby their lives is in their own hands and the decisions they make during their time here.