THE FIRST DIGITAL REVOLUTION IN REVENUE COURTS – A MARCH TOWARDS NEW INDIA

Address of V.Srinivas IAS, Chairman Board of Revenue for Rajasthan at the Digital Rajasva Mandal Launch Function at the Conference Hall of Board of Revenue dated
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Distinguished Members of Board of Revenue, President of the Bar Association, Registrar Board of Revenue, Senior Officials of DOIT and Media

A new aspirational India is on the march. Government has committed to fulfill the aspirations for building a new India by 2022. Indian democracy and Institutions have to evolve with the changing times.

The Board of Revenue is Rajasthan's greatest Institution with a historical legacy dating back to 70 years. Several eminent Chairmen have led this Institution with great poise and dignity. For this Institution to work in a 21st century Digital Age, we need to embrace technology modernization. The Digital Rajasva Mandal is aimed to achieve this objective of enabling the Institution to meet 21st century technology in revenue court administration. The Digital Rajasva Mandal represents a significant step towards New India.

I first came to the Board of Revenue, in 1990, as a 23 year old, an age where idealism and enthusiasm pervaded me. I was beginning to gain familiarity with the complexities India's agrarian economy and the complexities of land reforms. My interactions with the Chairman Board of Revenue, gave me an insight into land reforms of the 1990s. When I returned to the Board of Revenue in 2017 after a gap of 28 years, I noticed an institution that had not yet adopted the digital age challenges. The manual system of handling 65000 court cases, the largest pendency of court work in any Board of Revenue in India, was barely able to cope with the rigours of modern day revenue court administration. The case loads are so high that at times the Board of Revenue resembles the Sinking Titanic. A Digital Rajasva Mandal - a fully digital institution would enable the Saving of the Titanic.

Today, the first judgment is placed on the website of the Board of Revenue. This represents a major step towards a fully Digital Rajasva Mandal. In the coming days, the Board of Revenue for Rajasthan would be placing all judgments in public domain. This would be a major step towards transparency also. I am informed by the Secretary Justice Government of India that the Board of Revenue for Rajasthan is amongst the first
Revenue Courts of India to adopt modernization practices of placing judgments online.

There are huge benefits of transparency in revenue administration. The Board of Revenue for Rajasthan would hand-hold all Revenue Courts including Courts of District Collectors, Additional Collectors, Sub-Divisional Officers, Tehsil Courts to place cause lists and judgments on the Rajasthan Courts Management System (RCMS). All efforts would be made to cater to the needs of litigants to provide them information on real time basis. On the lines of the National Judicial Grid, the Board of Revenue would create a Rajasthan Revenue Judgments Grid which would provide the litigants with a wide array of judgments of Revenue Courts on a common platform.

The Digital Rajasva Mandal would represent a fully online Institution meeting the needs of 21st century land reforms. The Board of Revenue is implementing the Digital Land Records Management Program (DILRMP). The DILRMP seeks digitization of land records in a single standardized format across various departments, overhauling litigation in land with reduced timelines with fast tracked courts and judicial processes, streamlining property registration system and linking land records to stamp registration, providing easy access to Government data and other land related information.

The Digital Rajasva Mandal components are the following:
- Classification and bunching of cases in cause lists;
- Online follow-up of files in revision cases called from Subordinate Courts;
- Online follow-up of the campaign on reference cases;
- Online follow-up of campaign on revision cases;
  - Online linking of Sub-Registrar offices with the tehsils for recording of timely mutations in registered documents;
- SMS messages to Advocates on the listing of cases in cause lists;
- Digital panels for displaying the cases being heard in the court.

The Government of India's e-Courts under implementation in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India and High Courts provides for establishment of a judicial service centre in every Court with data management systems. Advocates have been provided with unique identification numbers and sms message communication is being adopted for informing them about the timings of the court sittings and sequence of cases being taken up as per the cause lists. E-Payment gateways have also been established for online filing of court cases. The Board of Revenue will consider adopting the software of the National e-Courts project for revenue courts.

The Board of Revenue with 20 members and decides about 900 cases/month. The
Government has accorded high priority to Strengthening Revenue Administration at field level. There has been a significant expansion in Revenue Administration with SDO Courts being opened in every Tehsil. The 2017-18 Budget of Rajasthan has allocated significant resources for modernization and strengthening of SDO offices, construction of Tehsil offices and for procurement of vehicles. The Board of Revenue has been advising the Sub-Divisional Officers to conduct court work in a timely and consistent manner. SDO Courts must function from 1030 am to 1.30 pm from Monday to Wednesday. Courts of Assistant Collector must function for 5 days a week from 1030 am to 1.30 pm from Monday to Friday.

The major thrust areas of the Board of Revenue are (a) a major campaign in reference cases and (b) a major campaign for expeditious disposal in revision cases. The Board of Revenue has 7498 Reference cases in Abdul Rehman vs State, and summons notices have been served in nearly 6000 cases in 2 months of campaign. These cases would be taken up for decisions and completed by March 2018. In the revision cases, the Board of Revenue is identifying cases where case files have been received for expeditious disposal and also the cases where case files have been called from sub-ordinate courts and yet to be received. The Board of Revenue has also identified Sub-Divisional Courts with high case loads where Members of the Board of Revenue would be conducting inspections to motivate young Sub Divisional Officers for taking up court work on priority and provide speedy justice. Cooperation is being sought from Bar councils for cooperating with Revenue Courts for timely disposal of cases to provide speedy justice to litigants.

In the run-up to a Digital Rajasva Mandal, the Board of Revenue would be working closely with the Department of Information Technology Government of Rajasthan and the National Informatics Centre New Delhi. The Board would also cooperate with the Directorate of Evaluation to conduct a transactions study to identify specific areas of which are time consuming in disposal of court cases. Further the Board has sought cooperation from the State Archives and National Archives of India for preservation of its permanent records. It should be noted that “There has been a transformation in rural administration with the Jan Dhan- Aadhar-Bhim applications and direct benefits transfers. The Board of Revenue must keep pace with the changes. Transparency in Revenue Courts is a major step forward. We hope to establish a Digital Rajasva Mandal that would provide the roadmap for Revenue Courts of India for providing timely justice to millions of litigants waiting for justice in partition of holdings, declaration of rights, land allotments etc”. It would signify the First Digital Revolution in Revenue Administration on this scale.

I seek cooperation from each and everyone of you to work for establishment of the Digital Rajasva Mandal in a period of 12 months.
Jai Hind.