



## DEVELOPMENT OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS IN INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

Municipal government plays a fundamentally important role in the social, economic and cultural life of a nation. It provides public amenities and services which are necessary for the healthy living and welfare of the individual and the community.

The problem of failure of water supply, breakdown in the sanitary services etc., are not only a source of inconvenience but can also seriously dislocate the social and economic life of the people. Thus, municipal governments provides services without which no civilized life can be possible in the city.

Thus, its working affects the life and activities of the people more immediately and closely than the administration at the higher level. Health, happiness and progress of the people depend, to a large extent, on the efficiency of municipal administration. The efficient municipal administration in the countries like U.K. and USA has been able to reduce the death rate and infant mortality rate, It has almost eradicated cholera plague and small pox. It has helped in spread of education far and wide.

But in a country like India which is committed to progressive industrialisation, the growth of urban centers of population is bound to be fact. If it is not properly controlled, it leads to growth of slums and problems. The administration of these urban areas forms an important part of the state administration. No state can really be well administered in which the municipal governments are inefficient and corrupt. It would be the most and the highest valuable services of the community, if we devote our time for the betterment of city life. The city looms large upon the horizon of civilization. Scarcely a civilization has existed which has not been based upon the city.

As Henry Drummond remarked, "he who makes the city makes the world, it is true that cities make men." Similarly, Aristotle rightly remarked, "men cannot be great unless our cities are great". City life "creates new economic activities, new political ideas and ideals, new forms of social intercourse, new possibilities of interchange" of ideas.

**KEYWORDS:** Municipal government, horizon of civilization, Communal bickering.

### INTRODUCTION

The progress of the arts and sciences, the development of the essentials of civilized life, and indeed, the spread of civilization over the globe

are, in large part, the result of the cultural have provided by the city. It is the city that, in Victor Hugo's graphic phrase, contains the vital juices of society.

Eugene Macquillin, asserts that "the chief advance in all lines of human endeavor has been through the nurture and growth of urban life. The leading city has ever been the type of culture. The



urban community has played the chief part in human affairs, and has in greater measure than any other factor, determined the destiny of the human race. The city has been the dominating influence in directing the course of history”.

The municipality, which manages the affairs of city, is a significant feature of our life. It is the sole repository of the legal wills of the community, and without its activities, the life in the city would be well nigh intolerable.

The municipality as an instrument of regulation. It was rather the product of a gradual evolution in response to the changes in the condition and character of urban society. Originally, its functions were devoted to municipal services such as law and order and fire protection, but as society became more complex, its activities were enlarged to cover a wide variety of services.

Having discussed about the important of municipality let us understand the growth of municipal government in India.

The excavations at Harpa and Mahenjodaro revealed that a highly developed urban civilization existed in the ancient past in India and that the cities had their councils, which were elected bodies. In other words of the administrative council of the city was modeled upon that of village communities. Thus, India to day in one of the earliest civilizations that can of local governments in the world.

However their vitality was lost during the middle ages owing to their inherent defect and external conquest. Yet the spirit of self government survived through the ages till it was reconstructed under the influence of western political thought and practice in the later half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

It may also be pointed out here that local government contributes to the strengthening of democratic institutions in a number of ways.

1. Policies can be best formulated and executed by local officials who are close to the people.
2. It gives opportunities to the public scrutiny of official actions and,
3. It facilitates decisions and promotes personal identification in the individual with the local units of government, which cover a small area.<sup>13</sup>

D.G. Karve, in introductions to a report of a seminar refers to the utility of local bodies as, ‘a base for popular government at all levels and in all respects’. Former Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had underlined the need for the local government as it could develop in the people the spirit of self reliance and new thinking of the new ways and understanding of the world. Lord Rippon observed, municipal institutions were desirable as an instrument of political and popular education, through which the people of India could be trained to take an intelligent share in the administration of their own affairs.

Frank, Moraes, a biographer, supported the contention of Havell and wrote, “Democracy was no exotic growth in India and centuries before the advent of British or Mughal rule, the stress was on self governing institutions and corporate life.”

However, municipal administration in India in the modern sense is of recent origin Madras was the first city to have municipal corporation. Gradually, corporations were established in the other presidency towns of Bombay and Calcutta. The municipal government outside the presidency towns was first introduced by the Act of 1842 which was applied in Bengal. This was modified by the Act of 1842 which was applied in Bengal. This was modified by the Act of 1850 and became all India affairs.

The real foundations of modern system of municipal government were laid by the British particularly after the transfer of power from the East Indian Company to the Crown in 1858. the prime considerations which promoted the British to establish local government institutions in India were (a) Paucity of finances of the Imperial power, (b) administrative problems due to the large size of the country, and (c) the need of providing relief to the District Officer from some of the details of his work. The policy of decentralization, which started during Lord Mayo between 1860-70 with his famous Lord Mayo’s Resolution of 1870 on Financial Decentralization, was the beginning. The Resolution embodied the first systematic attempt to make provincial governments responsible for the management of their own local finance. It was hoped that, “the operation of this resolution in its full meaning and integrity will afford opportunities for the development of self government, for strengthening municipal

institutions and for the association of natives and Europeans to a greater extent than heretofore in the administration of local affairs”

In Pursuance of this policy, several Acts were passed which not only extended the collective system<sup>21</sup> but also enlarged the powers of the municipal bodies to some extent. In fact local self government as a conscious process of administrative devolution dates from this resolution. Lord Rippon's Resolution of 1882 is rightly called the Magna Carta of local self government in India. Though considerable progress was made since 1870, both in number and usefulness of municipalities, the progress was uneven. Hence, Lord Mayo's policy on local self government was reviewed in 1881 on 18<sup>th</sup> May, 1882, Lord Rippon, who is acknowledged as the father of local self government in India, issued a historic resolution.

It aimed at fulfilling the national urge for self government, meeting the growing demand for political and social justice and making local government as instrument of political and popular education. Three broad principles were laid down for the guidance of provincial government: that they should maintain and extend throughout the country a network of local government institutions. That they should introduce into these bodies a large preponderance of non official members, and They should exercise control over these bodies from without and not form within.

The underlying intention of the resolution was evidently to give the people a more real and meaningful share in the management of local affairs.

The emphasis was laid on self government aspect. An Indian historian rightly remarked, “Lord Rippon's reform of local self government which soon took firm root in India and became the ground work of democratic institutions in higher spheres”<sup>23</sup>. But unfortunately, these principles of resolution could not be put into practice completely.

The leaders did not involve themselves in the development of civic amenities, but utilized the local institutions to agitate for national freedom. In 1906 a Royal Commission was appointed to study and report upon the progress of decentralization in India. The commission pointed out various reasons for the failure of municipal boards. They were (a) the head of the District Administration i.e., the Deputy Commissioner, dominated the local self government; the official control was meticulous and rigid (b) the electoral principle was not based on adult franchise, (c) financial autonomy was hardly conceded to municipal bodies and (d) the caste ridden people did not develop loyalties to the local bodies. They showed allegiance to caste or religious groups than the local bodies.

Hence municipal government did not find congenial soil in the country. Therefore, for the effective functioning of Municipal Boards, it made the following suggestions: that The chairman should be an elective non-official; that a majority of members should be elected non officials; that municipal executive should be strengthened by competent chief officers; that all cities with a population of 1,00,000 and above must have executive officers; that all towns with a population of 20,000 and above should have qualified Health Officers, and; that Larger municipalities should be given greater powers. These recommendations were given consideration by the Lord Harding's government, which issued a resolution in 1915, favoring changes in the structure and functions of local bodies.

But the introduction of communal electorates as the basis of election to municipalities impeded the healthy development of local self-government on secular lines. It proved a serious hindrance to the development of self governing principles.

The Mont Ford Report was guided by the principle that “there should be as far as possible complete popular control in local bodies and the largest possible independence for them from outside control.

In pursuance of this resolution, the government of India issued a comprehensive resolution.<sup>28</sup> It embodied certain basic principles intended to establish complete popular control over local bodies, democratization of the electorates and the composition of local bodies and a measure of emancipation from outside control as warranted by the local circumstance.

Professor Rushbrook contended that this resolution “placed in the forefront of the objects of local self government, the training of the people in the management of their own affairs and laid down a clear cut form the doctrine that political education must take precedence over departmental efficiency.

With the introduction of diarchy after the passage of the Government of India Act, 1919, the local self government was transferred from bureaucratic hands to those of elected ministers in all provinces.

As a result, the overall responsibility for the functioning of the local bodies was no longer to rest with the district officers and they ceased to be the chairmen, they retained general supervisory control over them. The popularly elected members established councils and executive authority was entrusted to the chairman.

Thus, the approach was more liberal and there was a deliberate attempt to give the local bodies greater freedom from outside control.

However, the working of urban local bodies during the period of diarchy was neither a complete failure nor unqualified success.

In the words of the Simon Commission "in every province, while a few local bodies have discharged their responsibilities with undoubted success and others have been equally conspicuous failures, the bulk lies between these extremes". In fact, laws passed during this period failed to prescribe an effective administrative structure based upon administrative efficiency and public accountability's Deliberative and executive functions were combined in the hands of elected representatives, but a proper organization of municipal employees into well trained and properly recruited services was not attempted.

Communal bickering and caste dissensions had a marked impact on municipal administration during this period. They not only impaired the efficiency of municipal administration, but also tended to prevent the employment of suitable persons in administrative posts and obstructed the development of a sense of common citizenship.

Besides, the two main requisites of successful local government viz., "a high sense of duty among elected members and a proper civic spirit among those who elect them, were more often absent than present". According to Jawaharlal Nehru, many of the failings of municipal bodies were due to the hybrid framework within which they had to function.

It was neither democratic, nor autocratic. It was a cross between the two and had the disadvantages of both. Lack of administrative experience among elected members, untrained managerial personnel and want of expert guidance also contributed to the failure of municipal bodies during this period. The inauguration of provincial autonomy in April, 1937, under the Government of India Act of 1935, gave further impetus to the municipal government.

Dyarchy was abolished and the popularly elected ministers were entrusted with full responsibility at the provincial level. Local government was classified as provincial subject. Popularly installed ministers were expected to fare better, but the circumstances like the occurrence of world war II and keenness of the Congress to absolve itself from the responsibility of fighting for others, forced the ministers in the congress ruled provinces to resign after the lapse of two years. It was a setback to the development of local government both in urban and rural areas. After 1947, it was realized that the local self-government would play a vital role as the chief architect of community making and the base of the democratic pyramid in our country.

As a result, the work of local self governing institutions was taken up in all the provinces to democratize the local bodies by abolishing the practice of nomination and introducing the principle of adult franchise.

## CONCLUSION

The real foundations of modern system of municipal government were laid by the British particularly after the transfer of power from the East Indian Company to the Crown in 1858. the prime considerations which promoted the British to establish local government institutions in India were Paucity of finances of the Imperial power, administrative problems due to the large size of the country, and the need of providing relief to the District Officer from some of the details of his work.

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