CHAPTER 2  

AHMEDABAD: URBAN AUTHORITY, 1856-1919

The focus of this chapter is on the discourse on local self-government in Ahmedabad, the developments therein and the reactions of the people. However, it’s also necessary to look at the conditions in pre-British Ahmedabad, and the system of government.

Pre-British Ahmedabad

The centre of the royal government of the city was the citadel, the Bhadra fort (named after a similar fort at Anhilwad Patan). In the Mughal times the city was under a Subedar (governor) of Gujarat, who was responsible for the defence of the city, criminal justice and the police, and the Diwan, for finance. Among the important subordinate officials were the faujdars or chiefs of police in the neighbourhood of Ahmedabad; the kazis who administered both civil and criminal law, the kotwal whose duties included the watch and ward of the city, the regulation of the markets, which included the prevention of monopolies, overpricing of short weights, the proper disposal of heirless property, the prevention of social abuses such as drinking, and the regulation of the cemeteries and slaughterhouses. He also acted as criminal judge.¹ The karoris collected the market dues and tolls. However, much of this royal authority to which the average Ahmedabad was subject to was filtered through the guilds and castes. Many trade guilds set up animal hospices, hospitals, schools etc. For those who could afford it, charity for the service of society was considered a religious duty.

Despite the fact that the government worked within the framework of custom, it was usually responsive if not responsible to the opinion of the different communities of the city. However lowly the occupation, it's practitioners had hereditary privileges and obligations. But how did the people react to infringements of traditional rights by those in power, when there was neither press nor political parties to ventilate their grievances. One measure was the threat of the guilds to migrate to other areas. Another was to resort to hartals. In 1816, four hawkers protesting against the conduct of some Maratha officials. When their complaints were ignored, all the merchants sat down before the palace for a day and a night. The government sent armed men into Manek Chowk, the central business district area on an errand of reprisal. This was an exception for normally, the government acted in harmony with the Mahajans and dominant castes.

Unlike the Mughals, the Marathas were unable to efficiently govern the city. There was a general decline in the city's security. Ahmedabad became a source of profit to successive Maratha governors, while the Peshwas and Gaikwads competed to empty the city's coffers. When the Peshwa's governor, Abu Shelukar usurped the administration and taxation of the city, in 1798-1800, the people had to suffer under legal and illegal exactions. Between 1800 and 1814 when the Gaikwad was in sole control of the city, the situation improved.

The Union Jack was unfurled in Ahmedabad in 1818. One of the reasons given by Carnac, the British Resident at Baroda, in urging the

---


3 Resident Baroda to Bombay, 18th September, 431/1816, *Public Department.*

4 Maganlal Vakhatchand, *Amdavad No Itihaas*, Pub, Gujarat Vidhansabha, Ahmedabad, 1850, p.5
British annexation was the symbolic value of the city as the traditional seat of government in Gujarat. The foreign rulers had to comprehend different values and customs, which coupled with their own prejudices, made the task of urban improvement more daunting. It was further complicated by political concerns as the British Raj being an alien government found it difficult to effect taxation for reforms. Also, the people would not brook any interference in their long established traditions, which the new taxation would entail.

In 1687, James II conferred a signal favour on the East India Company by delegating to them by charter - a corporation and mayor’s court in Madras. The scheme was due to Sir Josiah Child, the Governor of the Company who regarded it as the only solution to the difficult question of town conservancy. The new civil government was constituted on the most approved English pattern, with the mayor, alderman and burgesses who were empowered to levy taxes for the building of a guild hall, a goal and a school house; “for each further ornaments and edifices as shall be thought convenient for the honour, interest, security and defence of the corporation and inhabitants and for the payment of the salaries of the municipal offices, including a schoolmaster”. The mayor and alderman were made a court of record, with power to try both civil and criminal cases.

However, the people strenuously opposed the imposition of any kind of direct taxes and the idea of a town hall, schools and sewers could not be implemented. The first statutory enforcement of municipal administration was contained in the Charter Act of 1793. This Act

5 Proceedings, General Department, 1817, 26 August, Letter, Resident Baroda to Bombay.
6 The Imperial Gazette of India, Administration, Volume IV, 1907 (ed.), pp.284-85.
empowered the Governor General to appoint Justices of the Peace for the Presidency towns from among the British inhabitants. They were expressly authorized to provide for scavenging, watching and repairing the streets, the expenditure on which was to be defrayed by an assessment on houses and lands.  

An early plea for proper municipal organization was contained in Charles Trevelyan’s – ‘Report on Town Duties’, 1833. In recommending the abolition of those levies on trade, Trevelyan suggested that the financial relief offered will encourage the citizens to submit voluntarily to municipal taxes and will induce the societies of towns to associate themselves in regularly constituted bodies for the accomplishments of civic duties. It was not until 1835 that England saw the Municipal Corporation Act whereby, in Sir Ivor Jennings’ phrase “municipal corporations ceased to be forms of government”.  

Two episodes in the long trajectory of British rule in India influenced the evolution of local self-government. The more dramatic was the Revolt of 1857. More gradual was the transformation of India into a vast market for English goods, the emerging liberal discourse in England, influencing the policy changes.

The Mutiny led to a new spirit in the administration, an almost complete break with old traditions. The events in Northern India threw the small expatriate community together rousing their combative spirit and racial solidarity. The Mutiny led directly to three important policy

---

7 Ibid, p.285.
changes. The Crown finally assumed control of the Indian Government, the army was completely reorganized and a new attitude was adopted towards the Indian states. The first was rather a formal than a substantial change. The Company had for many years been in the position or mortgages in possession, while the administration was shared between the President of the Board of Control in England and the Governor-General in India. The Directors were little more than an advisory council and the last Charter Act of 1853, which introduced the principal of competition for the Civil Service, had reduced even their old powers of patronage. A Secretary of State now replaced the President. A new and powerful council of India was constituted under the Act for the better government of India. The Act established a chain of responsibility from the Secretary of State to the lowest Indian official. The Governor-General in Council was required to pay due obedience to all such orders as he may receive from the Secretary of State. Every local Government shall obey the orders of the Governor-General in Council.

The Mutiny subtly affected the district administration. The suddenness of the outbreak suggested that British officials were out of touch with the people, and that Indian officials could not be trusted. From 1860, the general policy was to build up a strong cadre of British officials. The decade, which followed the Mutiny, was the heyday of the paternal system. The new Government solely depended on the District Officer, invariably a British government servant. The Indian Councils Act of 1861, set up the legislative council to gauge Indian opinion, but the first three nominees - the Maharaja of Patiala, the Raja of Benaras and Sir Dinkar

---

10 op cit, p.466.
12 Thomson and Garratt, op.cit. p.476.
Rao, were from the nobility and the agricultural, professional or business interests of British India hardly found representation.

From 1861, the legislative activity of the government of India established the rule of law, and two decades following the Mutiny witnessed a rapid process of assimilation and political unification. A series of enactments followed which covered every aspect of Indian life. The Indian Councils Act of 1861 was followed by the passing of Land Revenue, Tenancy and Forests Acts and by the three codes, the Penal Code, the Code for Criminal Procedure and the Code for Civil Procedure.

This legislative activity whittled away the powers of the District Officer. The setting up of technical departments, centralised in nature and not under the former’s control further reduced his area of operations. The rigid administrative machinery made life difficult for the natives, coming into contact with Western legal and administrative ideas. The district administration, divided into various European heads of departments, took orders from their provincial headquarters. The Police Act of 1861 laid the foundation of the police system. An Educational Department under official Directors of Public Instruction took shape. Irrigation works, roads and buildings were under the Public Works Department. The Sanitary Boards, founded originally in 1864 to look after the health of the European troops, were extended into Public Health Department. Agriculture, forestry and railways all required specialised services.

---

13 The Imperial Gazette of India, Vol.IV, 1907, p.290.
14 Ibid.
15 op.cit., p.295.
Bombay Presidency was in the forefront in initiating administrative reforms. Taxes for Municipal purposes were levied in seven towns (including Ahmedabad, Surat and Belgaum) from the earliest days of British rule. In 1840, when helping the Government of India on the abolition of transit duties – (the *muhatarafa*), the Bombay government suggested they be converted into a municipal tax. The experience in Belgaum from 1848 deemed to demonstrate that people would be willing to pay taxes for municipal improvements. This encouraged the Government of India to evolve a new measure, Act 26 of 1850. The setting up of a municipality was still dependent on the wishes of the inhabitants; municipal functions included conservancy, road repairs and lighting, the framing of by-laws and their enforcement by lines. Powers of taxation included the levy of indirect taxes.\(^\text{16}\)

Between 1840 and 1853, the municipal constitutions were widened and the elective principle was introduced to a very limited extent but in 1856 a different policy prevailed and all municipal functions were concentrated in a body corporate consisting of these nominated and salaried members.\(^\text{17}\)

However, the immediate stimulus to the development of local institutions in the 1860s arose out of the post-Mutiny financial embarrassment of the Indian Government. Indian finances had been in an uneasy condition throughout the century. Income depended largely on the inelastic land revenue and a succession of wars had caused constant deficits, only filled by borrowing; in 1858, the Indian debt stood at 98 million pounds. The four disturbed years of the Mutiny left a deficit of

---

\(^\text{16}\) Hugh Tinker, *op.cit.* p.29.

about 36 millions, the equivalent of a year’s revenue. The Government of Madras wrote that ‘according to our belief, this is a more serious crisis than the Mutiny itself.’\textsuperscript{18} James Wilson was sent from Whitehall to be Finance Member, with the Herculean task of bringing Indian finances into equilibrium. One of his remedies was financial decentralisation. He proposed to transfer responsibility for roads and public works to local bodies, deciding in his budget speech of 1861, “it is of the first importance to break through the habit of keeping everything in dependence on Calcutta and teach people not to look to Government for things which they can do for themselves.”\textsuperscript{19}

**The Contours of Local-Self Government**

Government activity in the Indian countryside was almost entirely confined to the work of revenue settlement. Throughout Bengal, Bihar and parts of Madras, village society was subordinated permanently to landlord rule. Elsewhere, different ideas prevailed, throughout much of Bombay and Madras, the landlord was recognised as proprietor while in the Upper Provinces, and the joint village tenure was usual.

In Bombay and Madras, the ancient village was known and commended by Munro, Elphinstone and others. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, *panchayats* were awarded statutory recognition as petty courts in both Presidencies. But they received insufficient encouragement from either the revenue or judicial heads of districts. Their functions in the allotment and collection of the land revenue lapsed, in favour of direct dealings with each tenant; their influence in matters of

\textsuperscript{18} Despatch from Governor and Council of Madras, March 26, 1860. Quoted by Thomson and Garratt, op.cit. p.472.

\textsuperscript{19} Tinker, op.cit. p.35.
arbitration was enfeebled by the overbearing *daroga* and the dreaded power of the *sadar* courts. In the Upper Provinces in the early days, *panchayats* were consulted in case of disputes between villages over land functions, but here too the influence of both revenue and judicial administration was to destroy village solidarity and emphasise the individual in society. Nowhere was the corporate life of the village deliberately undermined, but the old order was slowly weakened by contacts with the new government, with its uniformity, its centralisation and its alien courts of law. As Dr. Spear has observed, the Indian village had survived down the ages because of constant neglect by governments.\(^{20}\) The new systems of rural local governments were artificial inventions, having no connection with the old ways.

As the District Magistrate was the keystone of the revenue system, so the district became the unit of local government. In Bengal proper where government officials were almost entirely out of touch with daily life, the only development towards rural local government was the setting up in 1823 of a provincial committee of Public Instruction with local District Committees. But this arrangement did not gain public support and the Committees were condemned as useless and abolished in 1844. Up country, ferries and boats were provided by government enroute from Calcutta to the Punjab frontier. Tolls were levied on all passengers and considerable sums were realised. Some of these were distributed in the 1830s and 40s, ‘local funds’ administered by District Officers, for the upkeep of local roads and bridges. In Bombay, local tolls were levied to maintain the *ghat* roads.\(^{21}\)

---


\(^{21}\) Hugh Tinker, op.cit. p.33.
Up to the middle of the nineteenth century British Rule had made virtually no mark on the towns and villages of India in the sphere of public works and social services; the appearance of the country remained largely the same, as had been a century before. In 1836, Sleeman recorded the jibe of an old trooper, “the British have no pleasure in building anything, but factories, courts of justice and jails.” But from the time of Dalhousie, “the engines of progress” of the West began to move. Trunk roads and then the railways spread around the country, the one-penny post came to the village, and government department officials appeared - the inspector of schools, the vaccinator, and the agricultural expert. Gradually the closed village economy succumbed to the lure of the wider world.

In 1870, Mayo had proclaimed that, “the age of improvement has begun” and the role of government became complex. The administration had to tackle famines, revise land settlements, compile statistics, to extend cultivation and moreover, to handle municipalities. The bureaucracy became more elaborate with its own specialised rituals, revealed only to their own groups and not understood by others. The changing contours of the bureaucracy widened the existing chasm between the ruler and the ruled. To “improve” India, it was necessary to get the cooperation of the civilians; however, entry into the civil services should be curtailed for the prestige of the administration was paramount.

The dominant motive for the small measure of reform, introduced by Mayo, was the relief of Imperial Finances. Moreover, money was needed to develop public works and social services and to pay for famine charges. [The famine of 1866 demonstrates the isolation of several

---

22 Ibid. p.34.
districts where roads were non-existent]. The proposed remedy was to endow the provinces with a share of the revenues and to make them responsible for education, roads and medical services. In turn, local authorities were to accept enlarged responsibilities.

The Resolution of Lord Mayo's government, which introduced in 1870, the system of Provincial Finance contained the following passage:

"Local interest, supervision and care are necessary to succeed in the management of funds devoted to education, sanitation, medical, and charity and local public works. 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 affairs." ²⁵

Though reforms were initiated in the field of finance, reluctance prevailed in appointing Indians to high executive posts. The scraps offered merely included few posts in the judicial services and some in the uncovenanted service. The problem now was to decide whom these Indians were to be, and how so limited a concession could be reconciled with the more generous pronouncements of the Raj. ²⁶

This was amply clear in Lytton's correspondence. His proposal was to classify government service into two categories. The Indians would be excluded from one category, and warned never to aspire to it. ²⁷ The

²⁴ Tinker, op.cit. p.37.
covenanted services would be reserved strictly for Europeans. As Lytton observed, "one cannot ignore the essential and insurmountable distinctions of race qualities, which are fundamental to our position in India; to pamper the concerned vanity of half-educated natives, to the serious detriment of commonsense, and of the wholesome recognition of realities."28

The reality included the fact that the British hold India as a conquered country, which must be governed in all essentials by the strong, unchallenged, hand of the conquering power.29 Thus Lytton mooted a second category, inferior in status and remuneration to the Covenanted service, open for service to Indians only and the recruitment was not through competition.

Ripon's tenure proved to be a refreshing change from Lytton's tenure. Ripon decided to reverse his predecessor's policies in the light of broad liberal principles, he brought to his new office.30 Ripon realised that India's were increasingly getting articulate.31 He wrote, "a policy was needed to win over the daily growing body of natives educated in Western ideas and Western learning. Unless we can afford to offer these men legitimate openings for their aspirations, we had better at once abolish our universities and close our colleges, for they will only serve to turn out year by year in ever increasing numbers men who must inevitably become the most dangerous and influential enemies of our rule."32 Gradually, educated Indians had begun to change Indian public opinion.33 The British realised

28 Lytton to Sir Clarke, 26 April 1878, Lytton Papers, 518/3.
29 Lytton to Sir Perry, 18 April 1877, Lytton Papers, 518/2
30 Ripon to John Bright 19 July 1882, Ripon Papers, 290/5
31 Ripon, Memorandum on Local Self Government, 26 Dec. 1882, Ripon Papers 290/5.
32 Ripon to Kimberly, 4 April 1884, Ripon Papers 290/5.
33 Ripon to Kimberly, 10th July 1883, Ibid.
that it would be the height of political folly to alienate the educated Indians for their influence and power would inevitably grow over the Indian people.  

Lytton shared the distrust of most Englishmen for educated Indians but Ripon believed that what was needed to reconcile India to British rule was the infusion of liberal principles.

Ripon was not merely reflecting his liberal attitudes but also the necessity of making the educated natives the friend, instead of the enemies, of British rule. The Viceroy concluded, “there are two policies lying before the choice of Government of India; the one is the policy of those who have set up a free press, who have promoted education, who have admitted natives more and more largely to the public service in various sections, and who have favoured the extension of self-government; the other is that of those who hate the freedom of the press, who dread the progress of education, and who watch with jealousy and alarm everything which tends, in however limited a degree, to give the natives of India a larger share in the management of their own affairs. Between these two policies we must choose; the one means progress, the other means repression. Lord Lytton chose the latter. I have chosen the former.”

Ripon planned to extend the elective principle to the Legislative Councils, as it would enable the government to consult representative Indians. Associating educated Indians with local government would bring them closer to their leaders and give them elementary political training.

---

34 Ibid, 9th May 1884.
36 Ripon to Forster, 19 May 1883, Ripon Papers 290/7.
For long, educated Indians were asking for elected representatives in the Imperial and Provincial Legislative Councils, and Ripon was in favour of it. Lytton had wanted to nominate his magnates, but Ripon’s idea was to have the largest municipalities elect Indians to the Legislative Councils, which would be reorganized to admit ten elected members, one each from Calcutta, Bombay and Madras and seven from the other main cities. This would advance the people’s political education of the people and help them to manage their own affairs. Associating responsible Indians with the work of legislation would do more to secure British rule than Lytton’s policy of excluding them. Ripon observed that his scheme would eventually lead to a further advance along the road of extended self-government.  

In 1881-82, the Ripon Government issued orders, which had the effect of greatly extending the principle of Local Self Government. Ripon took keen interest in the system as a means of political and popular education and under his influence the inhabitants of both town and country were given a more real and important share in the management of local affairs than they had hitherto possessed. Acts were passed in 1883-84, which greatly altered the constitution, powers and functions of municipal bodies.

A wide extension was now given to the elective system, and independence and responsibility were conferred on the committee of many towns by permitting them to elect a private citizen as chairman in place of the executive officer who had hitherto filled the post. Arrangements were made in connection with the periodical revision of the Provincial finances

38 Ripon to Hartington, 31 Dec. 1881, Ripon Papers, 29/7.
and to increase municipal revenues that had hitherto been devoted to the maintenance of the town police over which the municipal authorities had no control. They were now in most provinces relieved of this burden, on the understanding that they would incur an equivalent expenditure on education, medical relief, and local public works. At the same time, some items of provincial revenue suited to and capable of development under local management were transferred from the Provincial Account, with a proportionate amount of Provincial expenditures, for local objects.39

Reforms on local self-government kept pace with changes in imperial finances. Major policy of financial decentralization and local taxation was begun on the grounds that it was the best way to raise local taxes and to associate taxpayers with the levying and spending of their money. A small beginning was made in 1873, when legislation was passed sanctioning for other towns municipal powers long enjoyed by the Presidency capitals and allowing taxpayers in the district to elect members to the district committees. But the officers regarded the municipalities and district committees as administrative conveniences and not as a training ground for Indians in the art of self-government. The origins of Ripon’s policy of Local Self-Government lies in the plans of the Finance Department which in 1880 was faced by the quinquennial revision of Mayo’s financial statements.40 In order to extend financial devolution and to simplify the task of tax collection at the local level, Baring, the Finance Member, planned to put the elective principle to work by letting municipalities and rural districts administer local receipts and charges.41 Ripon commented to Baring, "I feel convinced that you have laid the

40 Bearing to Ripon, 29 July 1880, Ripon Papers 290/8.
41 Resolution of Govt. of India, 30 Sept. 1881, Gazette, Vol.IV, p.290.
foundation of a system of municipal self government which will confer increasing benefits upon India as time goes on."

Gradually, Ripon was encouraging the idea of local self-government. In April 1881, the Viceroy was asked to ratify the appointment of a deputy collector to manage the Ahmedabad Municipality; the Finance Department argued that in Western India there were plenty of intelligent and educated Indians capable of managing their own municipal affairs without officials to direct them. Impressed by this argument, Ripon urged Bombay to encourage the independence and real self-government of municipalities and to restrict direct administrative interference as much as possible. If the municipalities and district boards were to be of any use for the purpose of training the natives to manage their own affairs, they must not be overshadowed by the constant presence of the Burra Saheb.

In the Western Presidency, Bombay city alone had elected representatives. The city's notables prized the corporation seats and the municipality was run efficiently. Several of the larger mofussil towns—Poona and Ahmedabad had shown that they too wanted elected representatives, but the Bombay government was against it. Calcutta and Madras did not agree with the voting system. By 1881, there were 9 municipalities with election rights but only four had exercised it.

Despite such setbacks, Ripon was convinced of the potential of local self-government as an instrument of political education. The Resolution of Local Self Government of 18 May 1882 stated that the

---

42 Ripon to Baring, 7 Oct. 1881, Ripon Papers, 290/8.
44 Note by Ripon, 30 April 1881.
extension of local self-government was not meant primarily to improve the administration but rather to foster the political education of that growing class of public-spirited men whom it would be bad policy not to utilise. Municipal and local rural boards should be established whenever possible, with a large preponderance of elected non-official members. Government control at these bodies should be exerted from without rather than from within, official chairman being avoided, so that they should be encouraged to manage their own affairs. Rural boards should be given control of all local taxes; perhaps the assessment and collection of the unpopular licence tax might be one of their useful tasks; and they should be allowed to initiate and direct the construction of local works. But Ripon ensured discretionary powers to the government and offered ample space to the local administration over details of their provincial scheme. The Resolution carried no statutory force and was only permissive.46

The idea was also to offer the educated Indian a sort of a safety valve. This was amply made clear by Baring, "we are not forming a number of Boards and Committees to discuss local requirements in the way of education, sanitation, roads, etc. We shall not subvert the British Empire by allowing the Bengali Baboo to discuss his own schools and drains. Rather we shall afford him a safety valve if we can turn his attention to such innocuous subjects."47

In some of the large cities, Indians agreed that local self-government was an essential preliminary for the grant of something more substantial and accepted the elective principle. In 1880, the Indian

---

Association of Calcutta had resolved that local self-government must precede national self-government.48

Ripon’s argument over local self-government was linked to the impact of Western Education. How were the increasing numbers of graduates to be turned into assets for the Raj? Ironically, the provincial governments of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras were hesitant to implement Ripon’s proposals on local government and it was in these Presidencies, that education had made the maximum impact. The conflict centred around whether it was safe to keep the graduates out of the entire experiments of local government or to absorb their fledging political aspirations and mobilise them for the benefit of the Raj. The officials were pessimistic about the entire exercise. The old prejudices surfaced about the seditious Bengali, the implacable Maharashtrians and the selfish Tamils.49 This brings to mind Lord Macaulay’s observation that “having been instructed in European language, they may in some future age dream European institutions”.50 The spread of western education might imperil the Raj. But Ripon evidently agreed with Elphinstone that, “it will be better for us to lose the country by the effects of our liberality than to keep it like Dutchmen or Spaniards.”51 Ripon’s solution to channelise the graduates’ political energy to benefit the Raj was through local government.

49 Anil Seal, op.cit. p.161.
51 Ibid.
The foreign ruling groups in India formed only a tiny section, less than one percent, of the sub-continent's population. British administrators tended to conceive of Indian society as impenetrable, something, they could never be part of, nor ever perfectly comprehend on their own. The collaboration of powerful elite groups was mandatory to maintain the Raj. Reliance on native informants and leaderships with roots in local society were essential. But the question was how to interpret these features within the colonial order. Two distinct theories arose, though these theories in practice often existed side by side in the thinking of district officers without great dissonance. Both were rooted in British understanding, not only of India, but also of the British past.

In the first theory, great stress was placed on the need to rely on the 'natural leaders' of society, the hereditary headman to whom Indians supposedly maintained a docile obedience. Particularly after the Mutiny of 1857—which many attributed to the careless displacement of rulers like the Nawab of Awadh - it became imperative in the minds of many civil administrators to gain the support of those thought to be traditional leaders of society. Bernard Cohn observed how the British designed special rituals at the imperial level in order to secure the allegiance of Indian princes and chieftains. At the district level, civil administrators made municipal appointments, organised durbars (public ceremonies), and awarded titles in the effort to wed local notables to colonial rule. Often, this was to label the headman of religious groupings as the local

---

53 Bernhard Cohn, "Representing Authority in Victorian India", (ed.), The Invention of Tradition, Eric Hobsbawn and Terence Ranger, CUP, 1983.
55 Cohn, op.cit.
aristocracy. Those natural leaders were to represent their distinct communities in dealings with the ruling group.\textsuperscript{56}

It was generally agreed among the British that despite the Indians' lack of the sense of public spiritedness, it was possible with time to train a few to assume public responsibilities. This perspective became increasingly attractive to the liberal imperialists, who insisted that the civilizing mission of imperial rule required the gradual devolution of responsibility to capable Indians who in some cases would be elected by small constituencies of property holders. The late nineteenth century saw the colonial rulers become more committed to the ideology of improvement and turned to the municipalities and district local boards in order to raise funds for building sanitary works, roads and schools. In effect, the new local bodies granted Indians the power to tax themselves to raise money for reforms that their rulers wanted. Devolution would supposedly lead to political education to acquire knowledge and skill for the natives to manage their own affairs. J.B. Peile, proposing a new Local Self-Government Act before the Bombay Legislative Council in 1884 argued, "much has to be learnt before there can be a really popular movement to occupy the ground that is opened out by these measures. In reaching that assumption we shall now transfer some of our responsibility to the men of 'party of progress and reform' and they must decentralize as well as the Government. We should not be satisfied if political education were to stop short at a small class marked out from the masses... we look to them to ensure their success by executing themselves with a singleness of mind to set before their fellow citizens an example of disinterested and enlightened administration by private citizens. It may not seem a very

\textsuperscript{56} Haynes, op.cit, p.104.
lofty employment to teach the people... of country towns how to manage local conservancy, primary schools, and dispensaries, but it is the underlying growth of social organisation which is really important, and I think it is not unworthy of the best abilities and the highest ambition to build up in one's people with unpretentiousness and patient assiduity, the first foundations of a national spirit".57

The evolutionary underpinnings of this outlook are analogous to John Stuart Mill's idea of a child's growth. He argued that these notions applied 'only to human beings in the maturity of their faculties'.58 His notion was that commitment to parochial and primordial identities, characteristic outside the West render a people incapable of self-government.59 Thus, following John Mill's metaphor of human growth, the Indians were in kindergarten, while the British public had already attained adulthood. However, new stages lay ahead and elite Indians could aspire to public leadership. Thus, a framework was created in a peculiar mode of representation for Indians to create spaces for themselves within the colonial order.

No political education, according to the colonial authorities, was possible without continued colonial guidance and the masters were to be present to discipline their erring pupils. The experiment of Self-Government needed to be tempered by a concern for the welfare of religious minorities. As the devolution of power proceeded, safeguards were necessary for Muslims and other backward groups in a polity that

57 J.B. Peile, Speeches Delivered on Moving the First and Second Readings of the Bombay Local Boards Bill and the Bombay District Municipal Act Amendment Bill introduced for the Advancement of Local Self-Government in Bombay Presidency, 1884, pp.4-5.
59 Ibid, p.204.
would allegedly come to be dominated by high status Hindus. In local self-governing institutions, where the principle of election was adopted, a system of nominations usually guaranteed the continued presence of religious minorities and other groups in need of protection.  

Ironically, colonial reading of the sub-continent lumped together one set of people - the Hindus, never an homogenous category, labelling them as dominant, vis-à-vis the Muslims, an equally divergent group uniformly categorised as backward and a minority. The creation of each of these categories made possible the emergence of spokesmen who would claim to represent the entire body of their co-religionists.  

This lead to a major contradiction, on the one hand, Indians were criticised by the Raj for parochial and communal affiliations and on the other hand, it undercut the development of loyalties to public and nation by building in incentives to identify with religion and caste.

Let us examine the implications of British thinking on local self-governament on Ahmedabad.

The Administrative System

British Gujarat, as distinct from the native states, was composed of five districts – viz. Ahmedabad, Kaira, Surat, Broach and Panchmahals. These five districts constituted the Northern Division of Bombay Presidency. The Governor was at the apex of the administration, with Councillors to assist him. For administrative efficiency, the Presidency

---

60 Paul Brass, Language, Religion and Politics in North India, CUP, 1974 and Peter Moody, The Muslims of British India, CUP, 1972, examines and critiques the bogey of Muslim backwardness.
62 Hunter (Sir) W.W, Bombay, 1885-1890, Bombay, 1892, p.50.
was further divided into division, district, taluka, and village. Commissioners, Collectors, Mamlatdars and Patels respectively, headed these units and each was subordinate to the authority above. The district was the most important unit of administration. 63

In Ahmedabad, like in other cities, the entire machinery was functionally divided into Revenue, Police, Justice (the three constituted the chief administrative matrix), Education, Public Health and Excise. Not surprisingly, the Revenue Department headed by a Collector was also the general head of the district administration, as revenue collection was one of the chief tasks of the Raj. "The Collector is the chief civil officer in his own District, irrespective of seniority and within the limits of his charge takes precedence before civilians and Lieutenant Colonels in the army". 64

A novel feature of the British administration was the constitution of a separate Police Department. In pre-British Gujarat, the separation of army and police and the further organization of the Police Department as a part of internal civil administration never existed. To maintain law and order, small contingents of troops under fauzdars were posted at various points. For example, the desais, who were revenue collectors also, looked after the law and order of their zones in the pre-British period. 65 The army too was separately organized on hierarchic, bureaucratic principles, and not made a part of the civil administration. Thus, the civil and military systems were strictly demarcated.

The elaborate administrative machinery, working on a complex hierarchy, based on fixed remuneration was a total break from the

63 Ibid., p.52.
64 General Department. Proceedings, No.4865 of 1871.
traditional offices, predominantly based on hereditary and customary usages. Now, the bureaucracy constituted a career and the office turned sacrosanct – the sole occupation of the incumbent. It would be interesting to compare the service conditions in British Gujarat with those prevailing in the native states in these days. Tapishanker Raval, an officer in the Gaikwad State remarked that the following were the conditions for appointment: a) flattery of the senior b) reading ability c) sycophancy, d) smartness in official work e) influence f) power g) caste h) years of service i) entertainment.66

The power structure was so meticulously arranged, demarcated and specified that even a superior officer could not punish his subordinates in an arbitrary manner. This is amply illustrated in the case of Durgaram Mehtaji, the pioneer social reformer of Gujarat. Mr. Freman, the Educational Officer was dissatisfied by Durgaram Mehtaji's work as a primary school teacher in Surat. Freman could not dismiss Mehtaji, who was transferred to Rajkot.67

The principle of demarcation of authority and restriction of the powers of superiors was also applicable to the rulers, thus restricting their arbitrary power. In 1855, a tailor, Vithoba Malhar got into an argument with an English gentleman, Mr. Mission, over unpaid dues by the latter. Instead of paying the dues, Mr. Mission got the tailor arrested by a Magistrate. After his release from jail, Vithoba sought the help of the well-known social reformer, Dr. Bhau Daji, to file a petition in the High Court against the Magistrate. Finally, the European Magistrate who had

67 “Gujarat Darshan”, Special Number of Vishwa Manav, May 1960, p.96.
arbitrarily punished Vithoba was fined. Similarly, Ardeshar Kotwal of Surat lodged a complaint against the judge who punished him, when he was wrongly charge-sheeted for bribery. He too was declared not guilty and reinstated in his position.

The secular principles of the British legal system dramatically altered the traditional privileges enjoyed by the dominant castes as illustrated by the famous Maharaja Libel Case where the high priest of the Vaishnavas, Jadunathji Maharaj was forced to attend court to give evidence in 1860.

Statistics reveal the growing tendency to resort to court, which signifies the increasing importance of legal norms and the growing need for pleaders, as reflected in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1878</th>
<th>1879</th>
<th>1880</th>
<th>1881</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ahmedabad and Kaira</td>
<td>12550</td>
<td>15092</td>
<td>15200</td>
<td>16003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surat</td>
<td>2939</td>
<td>3686</td>
<td>3680</td>
<td>3896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broach</td>
<td>3515</td>
<td>4450</td>
<td>5253</td>
<td>5514</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The New Taxation System

The gigantic administrative edifice required finances. The British adopted a policy of direct and indirect taxation, export and import duties.

---

and levying fees for registration, stamps, etc. The Ryotwari System of land tenure was introduced in Gujarat. The cultivators were made proprietors of the land and revenue collected directly from them. The revenue was not assessed on the actual produce, but on the basis of the productive potentialities of each field. The rate of payment was fixed for a specific period. Periodic reassessments were undertaken. Irrespective of the amount of production, annual revenue had to be paid in cash. The cultivator's land was transformed into a commodity, capable of being sold, mortgaged, transferred, leased or purchased. The need for regular, fixed revenue payments in cash every year, irrespective of actual crop production, had a disastrous effect on the people.

The major source of revenue, land tax was supplemented by indirect taxes, salt tax, excise and custom duties. The licence tax affected all traders – vegetable vendors and hawkers. Income tax was introduced in 1860. Increasing civil and military expenses led to new schemes like stamp duties and registration cess. The passing of the Municipal Act in 1850 empowered the municipalities and local boards in towns and cities to impose local taxes.

The salient features of the taxation system were as follows: (a) No arbitrary levies but uniformity of application. (b) Cash based collection, which altered the nature of the subsistence and barter-based economy. (c) To comprehend the tax system, special skills like record keeping and accounting were required. This widened the scale of political relationships. The new taxation measures have to be seen in the context of

72 The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol.IV, 1909, pp.172-175.(Table No. 1)
the changes in the local self-government wherein the idea was to make the cities pay for better governance.

Along with the innovative tax measures and hierarchic bureaucracy, the city also got a taste of local self-government, which radically altered the built environment and consequently gave rise to power politics and the need for specialised skills to negotiate the corridors of power.

The history of urban improvement in nineteenth century Ahmedabad falls naturally into two periods – the first period ranging from 1817 to 1883, when the city was ruled by the collectors of varying interests and abilities and devotion to their charge, in cooperation with the leading citizens, the members of the traditional financial and commercial elite. The second period followed Lord Ripon’s Local Self Government Reforms, after 1883 onwards when the municipality was popularly constituted.

The Town Wall Committee

The Town Wall Committee preceded Ahmedabad Municipality. The committee was formed to protect the city, its industry and commerce and to collect the town duties. It also reflects the government’s regard for the traditional institutions of Ahmedabad and the survival of the community spirit of the people. The Ahmedabads had requested successive British officers to repair the town wall, but to no avail. It was proposed that a house tax be levied to defray the cost of repairing it, to be collected from caste groups, by the Collector, Mr. A. Crawford. Finally, in 1830, Andrew

---

Dunlop, the Revenue Commissioner pointed out the danger to a rich and defenceless city.\(^{76}\)

The leading people of the city were opposed to the idea of a house-tax but agreed to a small increase in the town duties, to repair the wall. They also thought that the government engineers too expensive and suggested that the government set up a committee comprising the Collector and Judge to contract the repairs. The government proposed the Acting Collectors of Sea Customs in Gujarat to join the Committee and Dunlop proposed the *Nagarsheth* and *Kazi* also to be a part of the same Committee. The Town Wall Committee was duly constituted on 22\(^{nd}\) April 1831. As per the agreement, the duties on certain commodities were slightly raised (Regulation 12 of 1831). After the work was completed, the increase was to be reduced to the level sufficient to keep the wall in proper condition.

The merchants and traders of the city voluntarily raised a fund. A Committee consisting of a Judge, the Collector and selected Native members administered this fund known as the ‘City Walls Restoration Fund’. Even after the city walls were repaired, the subscribers to the City Wall Restoration Fund continued their subscriptions to form a fund for the general management and improvement of the city. This is probably the earliest effort of organised municipal self-government in the Western Presidency.\(^{77}\)

In 1842 the rebuilding of the wall was completed and it was proposed that the enhanced duties be continued in order to provide for

---

\(^{76}\) *Commissioner's Circuit Report*, Revenue Department, 12/293/1830.

other improvements like a better water supply and the watering of the roads to lay the dust and harden their surface. For this, the government sought the people’s opinion. In turn, the people replied in a letter bearing the signatures of the Kazi, Nagarsheth and forty one others, that they thought the duties should be kept at their existing rates until certain further works were completed and then lowered to provide for the continuing expenses. Boman Behram comments that their brief and business-like reply evinces a shrewd eye for economy of ways and means, which is the hallmark of a very influential section of the Hindu community of Ahmedabad.\textsuperscript{78} The Nagarsheth had a powerful civic role to play, even under the new dispensation as the people’s reply was delayed for several months due to the Nagarsheth’s absence.\textsuperscript{79}

The following public works were on the people’s agenda i.e. to construct a reservoir at Manek Chowk, a charitable dharamsala for travellers and the poor, a grain market, to deposit garbage outside the gates, to keep the walls in good repair and water the roads, to convey water to the reservoir and feed the poor.

Generally, the committee (the City Walls Restoration Fund) had a free hand in implementation and it consulted the principal castes before any decision was taken. There were walls built around the suburbs of Vitulpura and Saraspur. Vitulpura was located near the southern roads leading out of the city and if the merchants reached late to enter the city, they had to spend the night there, fearing robbers. A centre of silk manufacture, Saraspur had contributed to the Town Wall Fund and


\textsuperscript{79} Gillian, op.cit, p.112.
petitioned for a wall. Around 1846, certain city streets were being watered. *Vitulpura* got a *dharamshala* for travellers, a grain market and garbage removed from the city gates. The Town Wall Committee also took up other works like the maintenance of fire engines, the lighting of some of the streets, the provision and clearing of public privies, the construction and graveling of roads, the filling of potholes, the removal of rubbish from the city and the construction of police posts. In the Western Presidency, it was the first instance of people voluntarily paying taxes to improve their living environment.80 During the 1857 Revolt, the traders and financiers petitioned the Town Wall Committee to engage 400 watchmen to help the police to protect the city. This was the final activity of the Town Wall Committee.81

**The Politics of Protest**

The taxation system proved irksome for the people. With the passage of Time, the burden of taxation increased and taxes on necessities like salt proved extremely unbearable.82 The taxes on the trading community, especially the License Tax, led to protests and *hartal*, especially in Surat. The trade policy of the Raj, with discriminative tariffs, leading to the ruin of handicrafts, loss of employment, the consequent burden on land, cash driven economy, all generated discontent.

In Bombay Presidency, in August 1844, the duty on salt was raised from 8 *annas* to a rupee per *maund*, leading to protests in Surat, with around 30,000 people protesting. The feeling of discontent was “universal, 

---

81 *The Times of India*, Nineteenth October 1857.
from the lowest to the highest, and the city appeared to be on the verge of insurrection". 83 Faced with this spontaneous revolt, the Magistrate withdrew the proclamation but said a fresh order had to be passed, which abolished from this date within the limits of the Bombay Presidency all town duties, all taxes upon traders and professions (Muhatarffa), customary tolls on village officers under the head of ‘Ballotee Taxes’, and after this the Salt Tax was imposed. 84 The salt tax enhanced government coffers by Rs.22 lakhs, while the withdrawal of other taxes except salt, meant the loss of only one lakh. 85 Sympathizing with the people, the famous social reformer Durgaram observed that “when the king oppresses people, the people by fighting, by punishing should give the political rule to some other person. If the king decides to torture people then the people should show their strength to the king”. His biographer notes that if such sentiments had been expressed in 1878 instead of 1844, then Durgaram would have been shipped to the Andamans. 86 The introduction of the Bengal Standard Weights and Measures in 1848 and Income Tax in 1860 was also opposed. 87

In 1870, widespread protests greeted the British Government decision to levy a Licence Tax on traders, including petty hawkers and vegetable vendors. The people resorted to demonstrations and strikes under the leadership of the Nagarsheth and the Mahajan. When the police resorted to lathi charge, the protests turned violent especially in Surat. The press criticised the government’s action in imposing Arbitrary Acts

83 Ibid, p.11.
84 Ibid, p.15.
85 Ibid.
86 Mahipatram Rupram, Durgaram Charitra, Ahmedabad 1879, pp.102-03.
without taking into account the opinions of non-official members of the legislative council.\textsuperscript{88} When the citizens of Bombay wanted to hold a meeting at the Town Hall, the authorities refused permission, leading to criticism.\textsuperscript{89} "The behaviour of the authorities and the police is very much to be condemned, they were terrorising the people by arresting any person they laid their hands on. It is reported that the military fired nearly 40 rounds".\textsuperscript{90} The protestors were charged with committing criminal acts of violence, obstructing the maintenance of law and order by the police and inciting people to acts of violence.\textsuperscript{91}

These protests reveal the emergence of new techniques of protest against foreign rule, which gained prominence in the coming years. The impartial judicial process resulted in the acquittal of the accused in the violence. The press highlighted all these issues.\textsuperscript{92}

The judicial procedures were the most cumbersome of the administrative structure, with the cases dragging on for years. As the poet Dalpatram pointed out in his poem "In Praise of the Rule" (Rajya Prashansa), the technicalities and subtlety of the clauses of the Acts were so complex that it took as much time for eminent lawyers to interpret them as it took the theologians to interpret the Vedas.\textsuperscript{93}

However, the administrative hierarchy was by its very nature unequal and its processes proved irksome for those at the receiving end, lower officials or the \textit{ryots}. The peons and \textit{karkoons} found the behaviour

\textsuperscript{88} Swantantra, Feb. 1878, p.2 (monthly).
\textsuperscript{89} Surat Riot Case, op.cit. p.2, 3.
\textsuperscript{90} \textit{Rast Gofiar}, 12 April 1878.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., pp.78-79.
\textsuperscript{93} Dalpatram, \textit{Dalpatkavya}, Part II, 1924, Ahmedabad, p.97.
of their superiors, constant demand for perquisites very humiliating. The government or British mercantile office was a space where the clerks were subject to foreign authority in a direct, everyday sense, in encounters characterised by racist insult and efforts to impose a novel discipline of clock time.\textsuperscript{94}

The Public Sphere

The emergent culture of protests lead to public associations, which in tandem with the municipal administration widened the scope of public sphere in the city. The attempt of the authorities to improve the cityscape, provide amenities, the public response to such gestures, the evolving civic leadership has been dealt in detail in the subsequent chapters. What follows is a brief account of the interaction between the municipal councillors, other local associations and the responses of the general masses.

The inhabitants of Ahmedabad petitioned to have Act XXVI brought into operation in the city.\textsuperscript{95} The government appointed all the thirty Municipal Commissioners. It comprised 14 government officials (European and Indian) and 16 non-official members, the leading Hindu, Jain, Muslim and Parsi citizens. The first meeting of the new Municipal Commission was held on 23 December 1856.\textsuperscript{96}

The Commission included over the years, most of the leading citizens of Ahmedabad, by virtue of their public service, inherited social

\textsuperscript{94} For details, refer Sumit Sarkar, \textit{Writing Social History}, Delhi, OUP, 1999, pp.176-78.
\textsuperscript{95} Petition, 12 August 1852, \textit{General Department. Proceedings}.
\textsuperscript{96} Gillian, op.cit, p.116.
position or wealth. Much depended on the Collector though many a time, the Commission outvoted his requests. 97

The working of the Commission led to a gradual erosion of traditional rights and usages. Appointments were being made on merit than family considerations, the *marphuttia* rights, the intermediaries between the merchants and government in tax collection were given up. The enactment of Act XIX of 1844, further abolished the remaining exemptions from town duties. In 1858, the *Nagarsheth* complained that his dignity was affected since the privilege to import duty free goods for his own consumption had been stopped. To this the government replied, “it is derogatory to a wealthy and influential citizen to seek to escape the payment of taxes which are levied from the poorer and less privileged members of the community”. Similarly, no exemptions were allowed for the ‘panjarapol’ (animal shelter) of the Jains and the Gosaiji Maharaj of the Vaishnawas. 98 In case there were two candidates for a post, preference should be given to the one who had passed the civil service examination. 99

Efforts were made to wean the public officials from bribery and personal influence, frequent inspection and dismissal of staff was carried out, the schedule of duties was simplified to prevent fraud. 100

During the nineteenth century, many political organisations emerged in the Western Presidency to ventilate political grievances. The first political association, the Bombay Association, was started in 1852, with the object of ascertaining the wants of the natives of India, living

97 The Municipality refused his requests that the compound of the City Survey Office be watered with Municipal money. *Proceedings*, August 5, 1874.
98 *Municipal Proceedings*, August 2, 1858, November 1, 1858.
99 Ibid, 10 Feb. 1864.
100 Collector to Bombay, 18 April, 1850, *General Department*. 

89
under the Government of this Presidency, and of representing from time to
time to the Authorities, the measures calculated to advance the welfare
and improvement of the country". A number of branches of the
Association were set up in Surat, Bharuch, Ahmedabad and other places.
In 1885, the Gujarat Sabha was formed particularly to try to attain special
representation for the educated classes in local self-government. The
Gujarat Sabha became the first vehicle to voice the feelings of the
educated elite of the city. Ranchodlal Chotalal became the first non­
official Chairman (1883-85) of the Managing Committee of the
Municipality and in 1885, its President. The Municipality was not popular
with the local residents and also with those administrators who would
push their development schemes only to make them pay more for them.
Though otherwise respected for his contributions to the economic life of
the city, the people referred to Ranchodlal as Ranchodlal Rentiawala
(Spindleman) in a spirit of hostility towards his sewerage and water
supply schemes.

In May 1910, the government suspended the Ahmedabad
Municipality for incompetence. In 1915, an elective Municipality was
restored with Ramanbhai Nilkanth as the new President. Electricity was
introduced in 1915 and the motorbus about 1921. In order to widen the old
city areas, it was also proposed that the city walls be demolished.
However, despite municipal improvements like water supply and
sewerage, the mortality rate was 39.22 per thousand.

101 R.P. Masani, Britain in India, Bombay, 1960, p.33.
102 D. Pathak and Pravin, Sheth, Sardar Patel, From Civic to National Leadership, Navjeevan,

90
The political temperature of the city changed by the time the First World War ended. “Before the war Ahmedabad was an unknown, parochial place lightly ruled by the British”. But soon after, it was to become, “in fact, if not in law, a financial and political base for the Indian National Congress and a leader and prototype of New India”. The city became the centre of Gandhian activities and a venue for new political experiments. The citizens of Ahmedabad too were becoming aware of larger national issues and shedding their political isolation. For instance, the press in Ahmedabad joined the national appeal in demanding the repeal of indentured labour.

In a lecture given before the city elite, Kalidas Jhaveri observed that some of the Municipal members acted selfishly and instead of infringing upon the rights of the citizens, should fulfil the trust imposed in them. “If you want to get good work done with less taxes to be paid, you should elect those who may speak harshly, but who are fearless, honest and are capable of sacrifice”.

In a scathing article, Prajabandhu criticized the lack of concern for plague victims by the elected councillors. “We regret to say that they hardly care for their electors once they secure their seats in Ripon Hall. We should like to know how many of the elected representatives have cared to go around their respective wards even once a month, with a view to ascertaining if their electors have anything to complain of”. In 1917, Mr. Haribhai Desai of the Liberal Party in a meeting of the Ahmedabad

---

104 Quoted by D. Pathak and Pravin Sheth, op.cit, p.31.
105 Prajabandhu, 11/2/1917.
107 Ibid.
108 Prajabandhu, 11/2/1917.
Parliament demanded Swaraj under the paternal care of the British government and to promote a bill making primary education free and compulsory and improvement in the condition of the mill workers. An amendment moved by Ramnikrai Jadavrai that primary education for children between seven to ten be made free and compulsory. Narhari Parikh stated that the civil servants got much higher salaries than their counterparts. The money thus saved could be used to meet the educational expenses. Yet another article criticised public apathy, “that it was a shame for the citizens that they allowed their city to remain full of filth, bad odour and diseases”.

The First World War gave a fillip to the prosperity of the textile industry. The war converted the mills and their agents into powerful industrialists. Still, in keeping with traditional policy of saving rather than over-capitalisation, this success was achieved so quietly that competent observers failed to notice that Ahmedabad was destined to pay a very important role in the near future.

The management system of the native business elite, sustained industrial peace, the Swadeshi Movement, all these reasons propelled the city to play a major role in the National Movement. Gandhiji’s and Vallabhbhai’s nationalist struggles evoked considerable response in the city and an outsider like Vallabhbhai rose to the city’s highest position.

Around the turn of the twentieth century the city walls came down and Ahmedabad began to expand. The population rose from 1,16,873 in

110 Ibid, 12/1/1917.
111 Ibid, 21/1/1917.
112 Ibid, 28/1/1917.
113 Dr. Hariprasad Desai in the Prajabanhu 8/4/1917.
114 Kasturbhai Lalbhai, Rotary Club of Ahmedabad, Ahmedabad, 1940, p.35.
1872 to 1,44,451 in 1891 to 2,13,727 in 1911, and to 2,74,007 in 1921, within the municipal limits.\textsuperscript{115}

This rapid growth created serious problems for the local administration. The plague epidemics of 1869, 1907, 1916-1918 and the influenza epidemic of 1918-19 strained the city’s sources and administration. After a spell of progressive improvement under Ranchodlal Chotalal, urban conditions deteriorated and the Collectors complained about the “horrible and disgusting conditions of most parts of the city.”\textsuperscript{116}

The constant struggle to transform the living space of the city, to improve its civic infrastructure under the auspices of the municipal system will be taken up in the following chapter.

\textsuperscript{115} Census of India, 1921, Vol.IX.
\textsuperscript{116} ibid.