CHAPTER - IV

PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA

Tirunelveli the penultimate southern most district of Tamil Nadu, is described as a microcosm of the State, owing to its mosaic and diverse geographical and physical features such as lofty mountains and low plains, dry Teri structures, rivers and cascades, seacoast and thick inland forest, sandy soils and fertile alluvium, a variety of flora, fauna, and protected wild life.

Thenpandiyanadu of the early Pandyas, Mudikonda Cholamandalam of the Imperial Cholas, Tirunelveli Seemai of the Nayaks, Tinnevelly district of the East India Company and the British administration and Tirunelveli district of Independent India became Nellai-Kattabomman district on its bifurcation in 1986 and subsequently was christened as Tirunelveli-Kattabomman district. As per the decision of the Government of Tamil Nadu to call all the districts by the name of the headquarter town, Tirunelveli-Kattabomman district is now Tirunelveli district.

The Tirunelveli Sthalapurana prescribes a tradition for the origin of the name Tirunelveli. The puranic version goes that one Vedasarma, a staunch devotee of Shiva, on his pilgrimage from the North to the South was invited by Lord Shiva in his dream to his abode on the banks of the sacred river Tamiraparani. The delighted devotee came to 'Sindupoondhurai' on the banks of the river and stayed there with his family. Once there was a famine which forced Vedasarma to collect paddy by way of begging and
continuing his daily prayers. One day he spread out the paddy to dry under the Sun before
the Lord, and went for his ablutions in Tamiraparani. He prayed to the Lord for rain
which he thought could be a remedy for the famine. His prayer was answered and when
he was bathing, a thunder storm broke-out and it rained heavily. Vedasarma rushed to the
place where he had spread the paddy. He witnessed a miracle. Despite rain around the
area, the paddy that he had spread did not get even a single drop of rain and did not get
soaked. Since then according to the purana the Town is called as “Tiru-nel-veli” (Sacred
hedged paddy).

**Origin of the District**

On acquisition from the Nawab of Arcot in 1801, the British named it as
Tinnevelly district though their headquarters was first located in Palayamkottai the
adjacent town, where they had their military headquarters during their operations against
the Palayakars. Two reasons may be attributed for naming it after Tirunelveli. One is
because, it was and is the chief town of the district and the other is that it was already
called Tirunelveli Seemai under the Nayaks and Nawabs. Both Tirunelveli and
Palayamkottai grew as the twin towns of the district.

**Geographical Data**

The Tirunelveli District is located in the world map, between 08° 8’ and 09° 23’
latitude and 77° 09’ and 77° 54’ longitude. The total geographical area of the district is
6,823 sq. km.
Boundaries

The district is surrounded by the State of Kerala, Gulf of Mannar and the districts of Virudhunagar, Thoothukudi and Kanniyakumari.

TABLE NO. 4.1
LAND RECORDS (9 FOLD CLASSIFICATION)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Category</th>
<th>Area in Hectares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wet</td>
<td>79,668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry</td>
<td>3,58,151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessed Waste</td>
<td>39,274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unassessed Waste Dry</td>
<td>57,696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poramboke</td>
<td>25,456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest lands</td>
<td>1,22,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>6,82,300</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Tirunelveli City Municipal Corporation

Climatic Condition, Temperature

In the day time the coastal regions are cooler than the interior parts by about a degree in summer and southwest monsoon seasons and warmer by one to two degrees during the rest of the year. From about the middle of February, temperature increases steadily. In May which is usually the hottest month in the interior, the mean daily maximum temperature is 37.1 degree Celsius. The weather is quite hot in May and June and the maximum temperature some times reaches 45 degree Celsius. With the onset of the southwest monsoon by the end of May or beginning of June, there is some drop in temperature. By about the middle of October, both day and night temperatures decrease appreciably. The period from November to January is the coolest part of the year with
the mean daily maximum temperature of about 30 to 31 degree Celsius in the interior parts. The mean daily minimum in these months is about 22 to 23 degree Celsius in the district in general.

**Humidity**

The relative humidity in general, during the year, is between 55 and 65 percent in the interior parts of the district, except during the northeast monsoon season, when it is over 65 per cent. The coastal parts are comparatively more humid.

**Cloudiness**

During the months of April and May, the skies become heavily clouded and threatening in the afternoons on many days when thunderstorms follow. In the southwest and northeast monsoon seasons, the sky is heavily clouded or overcast.

**Winds**

Generally light to moderate in strength. Between May and September winds are mainly north westerly or westerly. From October to February winds are mainly north easterly or northerly.

**Rainfall**

Main rainy season is from October to the middle of January. During these southwest monsoon season the rainfall is more in the western parts of the district. November is generally the rainiest month. The heaviest rainfall in 24 hours recorded in the district was 371.5 mm at Sivagiri on 29/10/1929. The average rainfall in the district is 814.8 mm per annum.
### TABLE NO. 4.2

**COMPARATIVE STATEMENT OF RAINFALL OF THIS DISTRICT IN MM**

*FOR THE PAST 5 YEARS ARE GIVEN BELOW:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>37.47</td>
<td>80.16</td>
<td>6.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>66.68</td>
<td>143.97</td>
<td>26.54</td>
<td>75.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>24.04</td>
<td>9.53</td>
<td>29.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>59.8</td>
<td>11.13</td>
<td>26.93</td>
<td>20.65</td>
<td>118.79</td>
<td>91.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>103.35</td>
<td>35.34</td>
<td>16.96</td>
<td>26.73</td>
<td>82.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>23.62</td>
<td>39.69</td>
<td>55.23</td>
<td>24.43</td>
<td>4.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>53.38</td>
<td>8.11</td>
<td>9.39</td>
<td>29.58</td>
<td>5.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>45.07</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>95.86</td>
<td>10.80</td>
<td>35.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>41.71</td>
<td>74.09</td>
<td>22.03</td>
<td>13.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>166.0</td>
<td>67.75</td>
<td>193.93</td>
<td>24.78</td>
<td>141.32</td>
<td>213.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>208.2</td>
<td>188.26</td>
<td>188.17</td>
<td>186.00</td>
<td>195.97</td>
<td>241.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>111.6</td>
<td>290.21</td>
<td>42.30</td>
<td>137.72</td>
<td>79.52</td>
<td>17.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Rainfall</strong></td>
<td><strong>814.8</strong></td>
<td><strong>793.06</strong></td>
<td><strong>653.72</strong></td>
<td><strong>826.16</strong></td>
<td><strong>7765.40</strong></td>
<td><strong>816.8</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Tirunelveli City Municipal Corporation*
TABLE NO. 4.3
POPULATION (2001 CENSUS)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13,72,082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>14,29,112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28,01,194</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Tirunelveli City Municipal Corporation

TABLE NO. 4.4
LITERATES

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10,41,964 (75.94%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8,75,274 (61.12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19,17,238 (68.44%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Tirunelveli City Municipal Corporation

Evolution of Local Self-Government in India

Local self-government in India is now an old institution. The form in which it now exists in the country is the result of a process of evolution and experimentation spread well over a period of one and a half century. But, in the context of Indian independence, it has assumed a wider and more increased importance.

Local self-government institutions, have very deep roots in Indian soil. In ancient India, every village had a self-governing body of its own and all the people enjoyed the advantages of local self-government. Towns and Cities had institutions in the form of
Assemblies, Committees and Boards. Officers like the Nagaraka or the Purapala were appointed by the state to coordinate the works of such local institutions.

Kautilaya, in his "Arthasatra" has referred to village elders and the emergence of cities. Magasthenese wrote in his book, "Indica," that at Pataliputra, the municipal administration was entrusted to a committee of thirty members. It was divided into six sub-committees of five members each. This autonomous body used to meet collectively from time to time and discussed common measures of public welfare such as the repair of roads, upkeep of markets, temples etc.

In the days of Muslim rule, towns were administered by official called "Kotwals." They were entrusted with functions like maintenance of law and order in the city, prevention of crime and control of markets.

Though the system of local self-government existed in India from ancient times, it took full shape and acquired a representative character only during the British rule. The origin of modern municipal system, as it exists today, owes much to Sir Josia Childs, who obtained a charter from the British King, James II, to set up a Corporation at Madras.

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77 Arthasastra, a treatise on statecraft was Written by Kautilya, the principal advisor to Chandragupta Maurya, the founder of Mauryan Dynasty in the 4th century B.C. It is an invaluable source of information for the study of the Mauryan rule (324 - 187 B.C) in India.

78 Megasthenes was the Greek Ambassador sent by Seleukos Nikator, one of the Generals of Alexander the Great, to the court of Chandragupta Maury (324-300 B.C).

which was formally inaugurated in 1886. It is noteworthy that there was no provision for a majority of Englishmen on the Corporation. The Corporation consisted of a Mayor, twelve Aldermen, and sixty Burgesses. The Mayor was to hold office for one Year, the Aldermen during their lives or residence in Madras.

But, only in 1793 was the first statutory enactment relating to municipal administration in India was established, by the charter Act of 1793, in the three Presidencies of Madras, Bombay and Calcutta. This Act empowered the Governor-Generals to appoint Justices of Peace, to make assessments on houses and lands and to provide for scavenging and repairing the streets.

**Act of 1842**

However, outside the Presidency towns, there was practically no attempt at municipal legislation before 1842. Only in 1842, an Act was passed applicable to Bengal to enable the inhabitants of any place of public resort or residence, to make better provisions for purposes connected with public convenience. But the Act proved to be inoperative, because it was based on voluntary principle and its introduction in any town required the application of two-thirds of the households. So, the Act was repealed.

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Town Improvement Act of 1850

The next step was that a comprehensive legislation for the introduction of municipal administration throughout India was passed in 1850. The Act permitted the levy of town duties but it was left to the people themselves to decide, in every instance, which mode of taxation they would prefer. But this Act also, like the previous one, failed owing to the absence of public – spiritedness and mutual sympathy. The Government was convinced that as long as the introduction of the Act of 1850 depended upon the general consent of the people, all attempts for the provision of municipal services would meet with failure. Therefore, the provincial governments recommended in 1855 that the Act should be amended and its voluntary basis should be abrogated.84

Town Improvement Act of 1865

In 1858, the British Crown took over the administration of India from the East India Company. It adopted a policy of reconciliation and decentralization of powers granted by the India Council Act of 1861. the Provinces were empowered to enact legislation for local affairs. As a result of this, the Madras Government passed the Town Improvement Act of 1865. This Act was an improvement over the two Acts passed in 1842 and 1850, in the sense that it contemplated compulsory taxation to defray the cost of police administration. It also authorised the municipalities to raise funds for other purposes such as lighting, water supply, repairing and cleaning of drains.

84. Ibid., p.24.
Lord Mayo's Resolution of 1870

There was, however, no comparable development of local self-governing institution in rural areas up to the year 1870 when Lord Mayo introduced his scheme of financial decentralization. This was the first great step in local self-government not only in urban but also in rural areas. His Resolution of 1870 provided for financial decentralization from the centre to the provinces and stressed the importance of associating Indians in the administration through municipal governments. It also said that the local bodies had to take up the functions of sanitation, education, medical relief and roads. The principle of election was also introduced.

Rippon's Resolution of 1882

Lord Ripon's Resolution of 1882 on local self-government was a new landmark in the evolution of local self-government in India. He is rightly regarded as the Father of local self-government in Modern India. While the earlier Acts attached importance to the idea of more local taxes, it was Rippon who gave more prominence to the idea of local self-government than to taxes. The keynote of the Resolution was that local self-government should be made an instrument of political and popular education even at the risk of a temporary period of administrative inefficiency. Rippon also suggested the formation of Taluk-Boards and District Boards. To quote Rippon,
“It is not primarily with a view to improvement in administration that this measure is put forward and supported. It is chiefly desirable as an instrument of political and popular education.”86

The area of jurisdiction of every Local Board was to be so small that both local knowledge and local interest on the part of the members of the Board could be secured. In these Boards, the non-officials element was to be in a large majority, the official not exceeding one-third of the total. Wherever possible, the local governments were to introduce the system of election for the members of the Local Boards and the non-official members were to hold office for not more than two years. The governmental control over these Boards was to be exercised not from within but from without.87 To legalise certain acts of the local bodies, for example, raising or levying of taxes, the sanction of the government was considered to be necessary.

Indians were to be encouraged to become members of these Local Boards and in order to attract responsible and talented men, courtesy titles, such as Rai and Rai Bahadur could be, the Resolution said, affixed to their names.

Royal Commission on Decentralisation, 1909

The next great landmark in the history of local self-government in India was the Report of the Royal commission on Decentralisation in 1909. The most important recommendations of the Commission were the relaxation of governmental control over

87 Ibid., p. 413.
the local authorities in regard to the preparation and approval of budgets, and relaxation of governmental control over municipalities.

The commission also recommended a classification of all municipalities on population basis.\(^8\) Other recommendations were that the municipalities should have full powers regarding to taxation within the limits of the laws, that the municipal councils should contain a substantial elective majority and should usually elect their own chairmen. Government officers should not be allowed to stand for election.\(^9\) It also recommended that standing committees shall be constituted for the administration of certain services and that they should be endowed with real powers and functions. And lastly, municipalities were to be relieved of their financial responsibilities in connection with the maintenance of police, hospitals, famine relief, veterinary works and secondary education. However, municipalities were to take over primary education.

**Resolution of 1915**

These recommendations of the Decentralisation Commission were considered by the Central Government, which issued a Resolution in 1915, favouring a change in the structure of municipalities. However, it was a tame affair, because, by that time, the First World War broke out and the Indian Political scene underwent a great change.\(^{10}\)

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\(^8\) Municipal Year Book, The Tamil Nadu Commissioners’ Association, Madras, 1972, p.2.
\(^{10}\) Ibid., p. 45
Resolution of 1918

The British Government declared in August, 1917 that the goal of British rule in India was to give responsible government to the people of India and that the Government was determined to take steps for the progressive realisation of that goal. In 1918, the Government issued an important Resolution on Local self-government.

The basic principle of the Resolution was that responsible institution will not be stably rooted until they are broad-based and that the best school of political education is the intelligent exercise of the vote and the efficient use of the administrative power in the field of local self-government. The Resolution also suggested an elective majority in all local bodies, and the replacement of the official chairman by the elected non-official chairman in the municipalities. The minorities were to be represented by nomination. The franchise, according to the Resolution, was lowered to such an extent that the constituencies really the true representatives of the tax-payers.

Government of India Act of 1919

The next important step in the evolution of local self-government in India was the enactment of the Government of India Act of 1919. Under the hierarchic system of Government, set up by this act, the Department of local self-government, was transferred to the provincial legislature. The Act also laid down a schedule of taxes which could be levied only by and for the local bodies.\(^9^1\)

Nevertheless, the Taxation Enquiry committee of 1925 which examined the problems of taxation at various levels of government was convinced that the finances of the municipalities all over India were inadequate for the services which they had to perform.

**Government of India Act of 1935**

The next great landmark in the history of growth of local self-government in India was the enactment of the Government of India Act of 1935. Provincial autonomy envisaged under this Act was expected to give further impetus to the development of local self-government. Under the new arrangement, almost all the provinces enacted legislation for further democratization of local bodies. But, the Act repealed the scheduled taxes introduced under the 1919 Act. Local Self-government was not accorded a constitutional status. There was no separate list of revenue and expenditure relating to local self-government in the constitution or in its schedules. Municipalities had to derive their powers from the provincial legislature. Consequently, provincial autonomy did not bring about any noticeable improvement in the finances of the municipalities.

The Great Depression of the Thirties engulfed the entire capitalist world and led to the emaciation of the public finances of the metropolitan economics and those of their colonial appendages. Consequently, there was a shrinkage of the finances of the local bodies while their functions were enlarged.
Restrictions were placed on the powers of the local bodies to levy or enhance terminal taxes on trades, callings and professions and municipal property. Paucity of finance affected the usefulness and effectiveness of the local bodies. Fresh proposals of taxation were subject to the prior approval of the provincial government. The weakening of the financial base of the municipalities, thus, led to their increasing dependence on grants-in-aid from provincial governments.

According to the Local Finance Enquiry Committee of 1951, the changes envisaged under the 1935 Act, were on the whole, unfavourable to the local bodies. The net result, therefore, was that not much progress was made in the field of local self-government under the 1935 Act.

**Growth of Local Self-Government in the Post – Independence Period**

India became free on August 15, 1947. There was a new kind of activity in every sphere of public life. One of the earliest acts of the national government was the setting up of a committee – The Local Finance Enquiry Committee-to-report on the ways and means of improving the financial resources of local bodies. The committee made an exhaustive study of the whole subject and recommended the exclusive reservation of 13 taxes to the municipalities. The Government of India accepted and implemented these recommendations. Then, in 1953, the Government set up the Taxation Enquiry

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94 The 13 taxes were: Terminal Tax, Tax on lands and buildings, Tax on mineral right, Tax on entry of goods for use and sale, Tax on use and sale of electricity, Tax on advertisement, Tax on goods and passengers carried by road or water ways, Tax on non-mechanical Vehicles, Tax on animals and boats, Toll, Tax on trades, professions and callings, capital tax and Tax on entertainments.
Commission, which examined the problems of finances of urban local bodies and made some important recommendations regarding taxation by local bodies. However, its useful suggestions for improving the municipal finances remained on paper.

The Central council of local self-government meeting in 1962 noted this wild lament and recommended the setting up of a committee of ministers to study the problems of municipalities. A committee headed by Dr. Rafiq Zachria, known as Committee on Augmentation of Financial resources of urban local bodies was constituted in 1963.

The Committee recommended that the urban local bodies should get a recurring annual per capita basic general purpose grant, and that at least 50 percent grant should be given to cover the increased administrative costs over payments of increased salaries, cost of living allowance etc.

The Five-Year Plans also placed special emphasis on the role of local bodies in the field of development. The plans made out a case for reorganizing local bodies in rural areas from both the economic and political stand points.

In the Third Five-Year Plan (1961-1966) the planning Commission paid for the first time some attention to the acute problems created by the process of rapid urbanization through which India was passing. One of the main problems, namely, the location of industries in Urban areas and the control of land values with which housing
was closely connected, was taken into consideration. There was a hint, however, that the solution to all the problems lay in strengthening municipal administration.

The first All-India Committee, namely, the Rural-Urban Relationship Committee was appointed by the Government of India in 1963 and the report which was issued in 1966 dealt with the problems of delimiting the administrative area for which a municipal body should be set up and the primary criteria which distinguishes town from a village and whether every town irrespective of its population and economic resources would have a municipal form of government.

The Central Government also set up three important committees to enquire into the service conditions of the municipal employees and other functional aspects of local self-government institutions.95

Another significant development was the separation of the rural local self-government from the urban local self-government. The departments of community development and Panchayat Raj were set up in the states as well as at the centre to deal with the rural government. The departments of local self-government in the states are, consequently, concerned with the urban local self-government only.

95 Committee on the Service Conditions of Municipal Employees 1968, Committee on Budgetary Reform in Municipal Administration, 1974 and Study Group on Constitution, powers and Laws of urban Local Bodies 1982.
The above description of the evolution of local self-government in India reveals the extent of interest evinced by the Central and Provincial governments in the development on municipal institutions.

**Evolution of Local Self-Government in Tamil Nadu**

Tamil Nadu occupies a unique place in the evolution of local self-government in India. Historically, it has enjoyed a privileged position in the South, performing a pivotal role in matters of policies and administration. The Southern states of India owe the origin of their municipal governments to the Madras District Municipalities Act of 1884.

The earliest available evidence to the existence of local self-government in Tamil Nadu dates as far back as the Sangam period. The Sangam classics provide evidences of local self-government in Tamil Nadu, when they speak about affairs of Villages being discussed by the people in fixed common places.

It was the Cholas, however, who perfected the system of village autonomy. The two inscriptions discovered at Ukkal and Uttarmerur (North Arcot and Chengalpatu district respectively) unfolded, the perfect system of local self-government in Tamil Nadu during the tenth and eleventh centuries. According to these inscriptions, the village was governed by the village Assembly which had a number of committees such as “Tank Supervision” Committee, “Garden Supervision” Committee, and “Gold Supervision” Committee under its control.

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96 The then Madras Government Epigraphist, Venkayya, in the closing years of the 19th century, discovered these two inscriptions.
The Members of the committees were elected and qualifications were prescribed. Notable among them was the “Kudavolai” method of election at Uttarnerur which has clearly been brought to light by Professor K.A. Nilakanta Sastri. The number and description of “Variams” and “Committees” differed in different Sabhas as also the method of their appointment.

The assemblies and the committees together exercised a number of functions such as looking after the construction and maintenance of irrigation tanks, management of charities, taking charge of deposits of money, lending and borrowing money, levying fines, controlling village servants and leasing of lands. In all essential details, it is akin to the democratic electoral systems of today.

Various types of local self-government institutions existed under the Pallava, the Pandya and the Vijayanagar Kingdoms also. They were the “Sabhas”, “Ur”, and “Mandalam”. They were all agrarian units. Sabha was the name given to the assemblies in the villages granted to the Brahmins known as “Brahmadeya Village”. The “Ur” had existed in non brahmanical village where the population was a mixed one. The “Nadu” was a rural local authority with a wider area. Above Nadus, there were “Mandalams”. All these were corporate bodies.

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97 K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, The Cholas, University of Madras, Madras, 1984, P. 495.
100 K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, Tamil Kingdoms of South India, The National Information and Publication Ltd., Bombay, 1948, p.41.
All these bodies were based on manhood suffrage. To be elected as a member in these bodies, one should not only be a sound scholar and proficient in Vedaas, but also must have a healthy body to withstand the stress and strain of public life. Thus, the concept of territorial, non-sovereign community possessing the legal right to regulate its own affairs prevailed from time immemorial.

**Town Improvement Act of 1850**

Municipal administration in Tamil Nadu, as it exists today, commenced with the introduction of the Town Improvement Act (Government of India Act XXVI of 1850). This Act authorised the Government to introduce municipal administration in any town in which the inhabitants were desirous of making better provision for constructing, repairing, cleaning, lighting or watering any public streets, roads, drains or tanks or for prevention of nuisances or for improvement in the town in any manner. The Act contained provisions for framing of bye-laws necessary for the routine administration by the councilors subject to the sanction by State Government. But, this Act was never enforced. The Act was purely permissive in nature and the people being unwilling to tax themselves, the Act was never introduced in any district in Tamil Nadu. Only, a few voluntary associations for sanitary and other municipal purposes, not governed by any legislative enactments, were formed informally in some northern district of Madras Presidency.

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Town Improvement Act of 1865

The next step was the passing of the Town Improvement Act (Act X of 1865) by which municipalities were constituted. Funds compulsorily raised under the Act were, at first, utilized to meet the charges of maintaining police in towns, but, later on, it extended to cover construction, repairing and cleaning of drains, laying and maintenance of roads, streets and cleaning of tanks and providing such facilities as may be necessary for the preservation of public health. The provincial government determined the quantum and source of taxation. One-fourth of such amount was to be given by the State Government as grants-in-aid. The District Magistrate who was the ex-officio president appointed the vice-presidents of all the municipalities within the district. The councils were to consist of not less than five inhabitants of the town, who were appointed by the State Government. The local magistrate and the Range Officer of the Public Work Department were ex-officio councillors.

Town Improvement Act of 1871

The Act of 1865 had hardly been brought into operation, when, the necessity of extending its scope and revising its provisions began to be felt. It was found that beyond collecting the taxes, fixed compulsorily by the Government, the inhabitants had hardly any enthusiasm for providing for lighting, water-supply etc. In order to set right these matters, a new Act, known as the Town Improvement Act III of 1871 was passed. As per this Act, the Government withdrew the grants-in-aid of 25% of the compulsory expenditure, which under the Act of 1865, had to be contributed by the Government. This was done partly for financial reasons and partly for consistency, as there was no

justification for giving such a grant to the municipalities, when the same was denied to the Local Board. The number of ex-officio members was reduced from three to two.

With the introduction of this Act, the municipalities were given additional functions such as the maintenance of hospitals and dispensaries, schools, birth and death registration and vaccination. The term of office of the members was raised from one to three years. The District Collector was the president of the municipal councils in the district. The vice-presidents of the municipalities were appointed by the Government. Provision was made for the election of councillors by the taxpayers. The Government also appointed inspecting officers to supervise the functioning of municipalities. The municipalities were no longer required to contribute towards police charges.

**Madras District Municipalities Act of 1884.**

The great landmark in the history of evolution of municipal administration in Tamil Nadu, was the passing of the Madras District Municipalities Act of 1884. In 1882, a committee was appointed by the State Government to go its recommendations, this Act. This act was passed. This Act superseded the Town Improvement Act of 1871 and for the first time introduced the term “Municipalities” into the title, while the former Acts having been styled only as Town Improvement Acts. It also adopted new terms, namely, “Council” and “Councillors” in lieu of the old terms “Commission” and “Commissioners”, employed in the earlier Acts. The municipal council was to consist of not less than twelve members and their term of office was to be three years. The

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Revenue Divisional Officer in charge of the sub-division of the district, in which the Municipality was situated, was made an ex-officio councillor. Rest of the councillors were to be appointed by the Government or with the permission of the Government, any portion not exceeding three-fourths of total numbers of councilors might be elected by the tax-players.

The chairman was appointed by the Government or elected by the councillors from among themselves, with the permission of the Government. He was the executive officer of the council. The Government had the power to remove any chairman or councillor at any time. The district collector was vested with emergency powers.

The only new tax which the municipalities levied under this Act, was water tax at the rate of 4 per cent on the annual rental value of houses and lands.

**Tamil Nadu District Municipalities Act of 1920**

Based on the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Decentralisation, the Tamil Nadu District Municipalities Act of 1920 was passed, repealing the Act of 1884. This Act increased the number of elected members of the municipal council. The elected portion of the councilors was not to be less than three-fourths of the total number of councilors. The rest were to be appointed by the Government having regard to the representation of the Muslims and other minority communities. The term of councilers was fixed at three years. They were to elect their chairman and Vice-chairman. It also

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105 Municipal Directory, p.4.
provided for creation and appointment of the posts of Health officers and municipal engineers and granted larger powers to the municipal engineers and granted larger powers to the municipal council to levy local taxes to open schools and dispensaries and to fix the strength of the municipal council.

It is this Act, which is still in operation, though it has undergone quite a few changes. In 1920, an Inspector of Municipal Council was appointed to supervise the working of the Municipalities.

According to this Act, every municipal council might levy a property tax, a tax on companies, a profession tax, a vehicle tax and tolls on vehicles and animals entering the municipal area. The rates of taxes were not fixed by the Government, the latitude being given to the council. The Government was empowered to appoint Auditors to audit the municipal funds.

The municipal councils were given full control over streets, public water courses, tanks and wells. The councils were also responsible for drainage, scavenging, maintenance and repair of buildings, for taking precautionary measures against outbreak of fire and for issuing licenses for starting factories and industries and for running markets and slaughter-houses. The councils were also to maintain a register of vital statistics and arrange for compulsory vaccination.
Amendments to the Act of 1920

To the Act of 1920, subsequent amending Acts were passed. The Amending Act of 1930 provided for the reservation of seats of minority communities. The disqualification of women to stand for election was removed. This Act did away with nomination and laid down that every municipal councilor should be elected.

Another important amendment was made by the Amending Act of 1933, which introduced the system of appointing the Municipal Commissioners by the State Government.

Ever since 1947, when the popular ministries took over office, the Government have been considering at various times, the question of amending the various provisions of the Tamil Nadu District Municipalities Act of 1920, so as to be in conformity with the popular aspirations.

Accordingly, the Government, in November 1949, appointed a committee with C.S. Rathna Sabapathy Mudaliar, as Chairman, to consider the question of re-organisation of municipal administration. Subsequently, the Government passed orders in 1955, conferring more powers on municipal chairman.

The "White Paper on the Reforms of Local Administration in Madras State including Madras City Corporation" was placed before the legislature in October, 1957. The legislature appointed a joint committee of both the Houses for finalizing the proposals contained in the white paper. Based on its recommendations, the Act of 1920 was amended, making provision for the constitution of Townships for Municipal areas.
Classification of Municipalities

In Tamil Nadu, Municipalities are classified into grades, according to their income. The classification, that was in vogue from 1952 to 1962 was made, taking into account only the average annual income.

In 1983, the Government, ordered that revised norms be adopted for further reclassification of municipalities, subject to the condition that in computing the overall income of Municipality, loans, lapsed deposits and non-statutory grants should not be taken into account, for the purpose of upgradation, but only the income derived from the Municipality for the last three consecutive years is to be taken into account.107

The council which is the physical embodiment of grass-root democracy is the legislative wing of a Municipality. The members of the council were all elected by the electorate and there was no provision under the Act of 1920 for nominating any person, though prior to 1930, a few members were nominated by the Government.

The Government have power under section 7 of the Act of 1920 to fix the strength of the council from 20 to 52 according to the population of the Municipality concerned.

Organisational set-up

In the administrative hierarchy, the Director of Municipal Administration is the Head of the Department and he is responsible for the proper instruction and supervision of all the municipalities in the state. He is assisted by four officials, namely, (a) The

Regional Director of Municipal Administration (b) The Joint Director for Planning (c) The Joint Director for Education and (d) The Superintending Engineer.

Tamil Nadu is divided into seven regions for administrative convenience, namely, Salem, Vellore, Tirunelveli, Madurai, Thanjavur, Tiruppur and Chengalpattu. The Supervision and inspection of First, Second and Third grade municipalities is done by the Regional Director, while, the Director is directly in charge of selection and special grade municipalities, in addition to overall control of all the municipalities in the state. Each Region consisted of municipalities in two, three or four districts.

From the foregoing facts, it is clear that the municipal administration in Tamil Nadu as it exists now, is the result of a process of evolution and experimentation spread well over several centuries. It also reveals that it was, however, only after independence that the municipal administration acquired a new meaning and a new significance and content.