CHAPTER VI

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

The people of South Travancore as in other parts of India lived in small villages. The village constituted the smallest unit of administration. Village means a local area recognized by the Government from time to time as an area for purposes of land revenue administration. In villages citizens settled their local problems and local needs themselves.¹ The people of the village were more or less left to themselves in administrative matters. Every village was almost self-governing and each village had its own headman, pramanis, the hereditary village servants, Panchayats, Kuttams, Police (Kaval) and Watchmen (Kavalar). Just like the local self Government which functioned in Chola administration, where the Ur and Mahasabha looked after all the matters of the village in South Travancore too village administration went on well. The functions, rights and privileges of each of these were well defined.² The village Unions and Panchayats had an important role in the realization of “Grāma-Swaraj”.³ The Panchayats played a vital role in the integration and development of village life.

For the management of the towns, Municipalities were formed and they had an important role in the local administration of the towns.

¹ Proceedings of the Travancore–Cochin Legislative Assembly, 5 November 1952, p. 736.
² Raja, P.K.S., Medieval Kerala, Annamalai Nagar, 1953, p. 277.
Municipal Government in India in its present form was introduced by the British.⁴ A municipality may be defined as a legally incorporated or duly authorised association of the inhabitants of a particularly designated place or limited territorial area established for prescribed local Government and public utility or other public purposes.⁵ The main functions of the municipal administration were sanitation and public health. The other obligatory functions were lighting of public streets, vaccination and registration of births and deaths. The other activities were conducting markets, leper clinics, maternity and child welfare centres, maintaining parks, running of libraries and reading rooms and subsidising vaidyasalas.⁶

**Village Panchayats**

Before 1925, village councils had been functioning in the villages and they had looked after all the problems of the villagers and settled disputes. The village council was generally held in the temples but the Nairs owned some of them. The council was held at the beginning of every month for the administrative affairs connected with caste. The village elders attended all the important socio-religious ceremony of the village.⁷

The Travancore Village Panchayat Act of 1925

On 13 August 1925 the Travancore Village Panchayat Act was passed for fostering and developing self Government in the rural areas of the state. MahaRani Regent Sethu Lekshmi Bai took steps to implement the Village Panchayat Act.8

Administrative Functions

For the improvement of rural conditions, the Panchayats undertook many activities, within the limits of the fund at their disposal. Their activities were mainly concentrated on the cleaning of streets, the construction, maintenance and improvement of wells, tanks for the supply of drinking water to the public, the opening of burial and burning grounds and the maintenance of grounds so opened, the control and management of cattle pounds and sanitation.9 According to the provisions of the Act the Government had powers to declare any village or a cluster of villages as a village Panchayat, consisting of not less than five and not more than eleven members. The obligatory and discretionary powers of the Panchayats were quite identical to those of the Municipalities.10

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8 Raja, P.K.S., op.cit., P.277.
9 Ibid, p. 5.
The Act laid particular stress on the principle that all the matching grants extended by the Government to a Village Panchayat, together with local taxes levied and collected from the people were to be spent by the village Panchayat itself for the benefit of the village.\textsuperscript{11} Every village had a village fund vested in the Panchayat and the fund was utilized to meet the welfare schemes and other expenditure.\textsuperscript{12}

**Bhootapandi Panchayat**

As per the Village Panchayat Act of 1925, six Panchayats were constituted in 1932 and one more in 1937.\textsuperscript{13} In the beginning only six Panchayats were established in Travancore. Among the six Bhootapandi Panchayat of Thovala taluk was the first Panchayat founded in South Travancore. From 20 February 1933 the Panchayat began to function.\textsuperscript{14} The Panchayat was named as the Village Panchayat of Bhootapandi.\textsuperscript{15}

The local Tahsildar was the Chairman of the Panchayat. The Chairman of the Panchayat was an ex-officio Government officer. In accordance with the rules dated the 8 August 1930 passed under the Village

\textsuperscript{11} Gopalakrishnan, M., *op.cit.*, p. 734.
\textsuperscript{15} *The Village Unions and Panchayat Manual, op.cit.*, p. 38.
Panchayat Act of 1925, the Government nominated nine members, among them six elected non-official members and three official members.\textsuperscript{16}

The newly formed Bhoothapandi Panchayat undertook the main task of laying street lighting, maintenance of cattle pounds, maintenance and repairs of public pathways, improvement of tanks and wells. The Panchayat levied a tax of four percent on the annual rental value of buildings.\textsuperscript{17}

For the village fund the Government contributed three fourths of the budgeted expenditure for first five years and half the expenditure during subsequent years.\textsuperscript{18} In 1938 Bhoothapandi village fund had an opening balance of Rs. 1397, the receipts amounts Rs. 602 and the Government gave a contribution of Rs. 560. The expenditure amounted to Rs. 1074 and the closing balance was Rs. 1485.\textsuperscript{19}

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From its inception on 1933 the Bhoothapandi Village Panchayat was functioning well. Subsequently, all villages of South Travancore had their own Panchayat to administer the villages. According to the notification dated 12 December 1938 the Village Panchayat of Thiruvattar in Kalkulam

\textsuperscript{17} Travancore Administration Report 1939-1940, Trivandrum, 1941, p. 184.
\textsuperscript{18} The Village Unions and Panchayat Manual, op.cit., p. 18.
\textsuperscript{19} Travancore Administration Report 1945-1946, Trivandrum, 1947, p. 401.
taluk and the village Panchayat of Suchindram in the Agasthiswaram taluk were formed.\textsuperscript{20}

In continuation of the Village Panchayat Act of 1925 the Government issued various rules and regulations now and then. Accordingly the Government issued a notification on 8 August 1930 which stated the rules and regulations regarding the preparation of electoral roll, elections, Panchayat meetings, by-laws, taxation, collections, finance and accounts, books and records, returns and annual reports.\textsuperscript{21}

**Village Panchayat Courts**

When problems with regard to property or criminal offences arose between individuals or families, instead of taking those problems to the civil or criminal courts they were settled locally in the Village Panchayat Courts through the prominent members of the Village Panchayats. Village Panchayat Courts were established to solve the problems or the disputes among the villagers locally. Village Panchayat court means a civil court of original jurisdiction established for group of two or more villages. According to the Village Panchayat Courts Regulation of 11 September 1914, a Village Panchayat Court consisted of not less than five judges, one of whom styled as the President. A bench of at least three judges was

\textsuperscript{20} *The Village Unions and Panchayat Manual, op.cit.*, pp. 41-42.

\textsuperscript{21} *Ibid*, p. 19.
constituted to go through every suit instituted and every proceeding before a Village Panchayat court.22

Group of two or more villages established one Panchayat court for them all.23 A regulation (I of 1915) for the establishment of Village Panchayat Courts in some specified areas was passed.24 The court should try all suits for money or for personal property the amount or value of which did not exceed rupees thirty. Government, however, were empowered to raise the pecuniary jurisdiction of village court to rupees fifty. No judgement debtor could be arrested and no immovable property attached by a Village Panchayat Court in the execution of a decree. Execution could be had only by the attachment of movable properties. These courts were established in Municipal centres.25

The Travancore Village Panchayat Courts Act 19 July 1918 and the Village Panchayat Courts Amendment Act of 1931, were passed by the Government and certain changes were brought about in the functioning of the village courts. According to the Travancore Village Panchayat Courts Amendment Act of 1939 “the value of the suit should be” “subject to a minimum of one chackram” (28 ½ chackram 1rupee).26

25 Ibid.
On the basis of the above said Acts and amendments Village Panchayat Courts were established in certain parts of South Travancore too. The Government issued a notification, dated 5 December 1932, revising the jurisdiction of certain village Panchayats. Under the Nagercoil Village Panchayat Court the revised areas were the ‘Pakuthies’ of Nagercoil and Vadiviswaram and Municipal limits in the Vadaseri ‘Pakuthi’. Under Padmanabhapuram Village Panchayat Court the revised areas were the pakuthies of Thuckalay and Kalkulam.²⁷

Another notification, dated 23 January 1933, informed the territorial jurisdiction of the Village Panchayat Court of Kuzhithurai and revised that of Vilavancode ‘Pakuthy’.²⁸ Meanwhile according to the notification dated 20 June 1933 the Village Panchayat Court of Eraniel was newly constituted with the proposed jurisdiction ‘pakuthies’ of Eraniel and Thalakulam.²⁹ Next to Trivandrum the largest number of suits filed and disposed of was in Nagercoil Village Panchayat Court.³⁰ Thus the Village Panchayat Courts served a lot for maintaining justice at the village level.

**The Travancore Village Unions Act of 1939**

In order to encourage rural development and to afford better opportunities to the people for making village organisations more useful and

²⁷ *The Regulations and Proclamations of Travancore*, Trivandrum, 1934, p. 177.
²⁹ The courts of Nagercoil, Kuzhithurai, Padmanabhapuram and Eraniel were once Village Panchayat courts and at present they are Magistrate courts, *(Ibid.)*
beneficial, the Travancore Village Unions Act was passed in 14 November 1939. Accordingly thirty nine Village Unions were constituted in the years 1940 and 1941 throughout Travancore. Each of the Unions was composed of six non-officials and five officials, subject to certain rules prescribed by Government in this behalf.

On the basis of the Travancore Village Unions Act of 1939 the Government issued a notification on 24 February 1940, to establish Village Unions in the following villages of South Travancore. In 1940 Thazhakudy Village Union of Thovalai taluk, Suchindram Village Union of Agasthiswaram taluk, Eraniel Village Union of Kalkulam taluk and Arumana Village Union of Vilavancode taluk were formed.

The notification dated 23 June 1940 provided for the establishment of Kadiapattanam Union in Kalkulam taluk and Arudesam Union in Vilavancode taluk of Munchira ‘pakuthy’. In 1948 the Government established Arumana, Kanjiracode, Pallichal and Karakonam Village Unions. The Government issued a notification on 2 February 1942 which accorded sanction to the Thazhakkudy Village Union of Thovalai taluk to levy house tax at the rate of four percent of the annual rental value of the

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34 *The Village Unions and Panchayat Manual*, op.cit., p. 86.
36 *The Travancore Legislative Assembly Proceedings*, First Assembly, 1948, p. 28.
houses situated within the limits of the union. Under section 9 of the Village Unions Act of 1939 and the notification dated 19 October 1944, the Government authorized the members of the Suchindram Village Union to elect their own Vice-President.

Followed by another notification dated 31 October 1945 the Village Unions of Suchindram, Eraniel and Arumanai were authorised to elect Presidents from among themselves for their Village Unions. In the year 1945, Government made certain changes for the improvement and effective working of the Unions. Government found that the Division Peishkars who were the Registrars of Village Panchayats and Unions in the midst of their many-sided and onerous duties could not devote adequate attention to the improvement of the Panchayats and Unions. The Tahsildars who were the Presidents of the Village Unions and most of the Panchayats were also similarly handicapped.

The administration of these local bodies was therefore taken away from the Revenue Department and entrusted with the Public Health Department. The Director of Public health was appointed the ex-officio registrar of Village Unions and Panchayats throughout the state.

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37 The Village Unions and Panchayats Manual, op.cit., p. 89.
38 Ibid., p. 90.
39 Ibid., p. 92.
42 Gopalakrishnan, M., op.cit., p. 734.
Travancore Village Unions (Amendment) Act dated 4 April 1944 fixed the term of office of the members of a Village Union as three years.\textsuperscript{43} The Tahsildars were relieved of the Presidentship of the local bodies which enabled the bodies to have non-official Presidents elected or nominated members of the Government. Fifty percent of the membership of the Unions was thrown open to election.\textsuperscript{44}

The Travancore Village Panchayat (Amendment) Act of 1945 was passed on 22 December 1945 and by that a tax on land was introduced\textsuperscript{45}. In 1946 except in the case of two Village Unions and one village Panchayat all, the rest had non-official presidents most of whom were elected by the members themselves and only seven non-official Presidents being nominated by Government.\textsuperscript{46} The term of office of a member was fixed for three years.\textsuperscript{47}

The Travancore-Cochin Panchayat Act, 1950

The Government of Travancore took steps to bring some drastic changes in the administration of village Panchayats. In 1950 an Act was passed to provide the Panchayats with wide powers to function as

\textsuperscript{43} The Acts and Proclamations of Travancore, Part II, 1946, p. 141.
\textsuperscript{44} Travancore Administration Report 1945-1946, Trivandrum, 1947, p. 163.
\textsuperscript{45} Supplement to the Travancore Government Gazette No.17, dated 11 December 1945/Vrischigam 1121, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{46} Travancore Administration Report, 1945-1946, Trivandrum, 1947, p. 163.
\textsuperscript{47} GopalaKrishnan, M., \textit{op.cit.}, p. 735.
autonomous village administrative units after serious discussions.\textsuperscript{48} When discussions on the bill for the Panchayat Act of 1950 was going on in the Assembly, Chithambaranatha Nadar the Member of the Legislative Assembly from South Travancore criticised the Bill. He said that the people of Travancore had suffered a lot for want of a democratic form of Government but this bill was being used by the Government against the welfare of the people and in future it might produce many harm to the people.\textsuperscript{49}

The first major legislation after independence with regard to the Panchayat was the Travancore-Cochin Panchayat Act, 1950.\textsuperscript{50} Rules for opening, management and control of public and private markets, rules for the preparation of Panchayat budgets, Panchayat Cart stand rules, number of members in respective Panchayats, list of Scheduled castes and Scheduled tribes were explained in the Act.\textsuperscript{51}

Powers of taxation and providing for elections under adult franchise were also given to the Pachayats.\textsuperscript{52} In the Act of 1950 notification regarding termination of office of the existing members of Panchayats, term of office

\textsuperscript{48} Travancore-Cochin Administration Report 1125 M.E., 17 August 1949 to 31 March 1950, Trivandrum, 1951, p. 86.


\textsuperscript{50} Gopalakrishnan, M., \textit{op.cit.}, p. 735.

\textsuperscript{51} Travancore–Cochin Rules Code, Vol. I, Published by the Law Department, Trivandrum, 1956, p. 213.

\textsuperscript{52} Siva Raman Nair, U., \textit{Census of India, 1951, Travancore-Cochin, District Census Hand Book}, Trivandrum, 1952, p. XIV.
of the members, appointment of the Panchayat Inspectors to publish the electoral rolls and to function as election officers and list of symbols which were to be used at elections towards in Panchayats were explained.  

**Activities of the Panchayats**

The activities of the Panchayats covered all aspects of rural welfare such as conservancy arrangements, sweeping of streets, street lighting, improvement of roads, digging of wells, tanks, latrines and mid-wifely service some of which were attended to by these local bodies. Some of them served also as rural reconstruction centres by running libraries or reading rooms, encouraging compost-making, distributing improved seeds and maintaining studbulls. In 1950 Village Uplift Centres were started throughout Travancore-Cochin for the general development of the Village Panchayats. Among the eight centres throughout the state Thamarakulam Kudiyiruppu was the Village Uplift Centre in South Travancore.

For the execution of public works in villages, every effort had been taken to expedite the works. The lands necessary were all donated by the villagers and no compulsory acquisition was resorted to. The villagers

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evinced great interest in the working of the scheme. Wherever Poramboke lands were available, recommendations were made to the Government to transfer the required area of lands to the department for carrying out the works such as sinking of wells and construction of buildings.

Public health measures comprised providing good drinking water, sanitary latrines, bathing ghats, tanks and drains. The Public Health Organisers of the Department undertook frequent tours in the villages under their jurisdiction and gave instructions to the public and the committees in the matter of public hygiene and sanitation. By way of encouraging dispensaries and vaidyasalas grants were given to such institutions.

The Co-operative Organisers attached to the Department carried on very useful, intensive propaganda in the uplift centres for developing cottage industries and agriculture. Sewing classes and poultry farms were started in some of the centres continued efficiently and produced good results. Funds were provided for certain centres for bee-keeping and poultry farming. The Panchayat Department undertook digging of wells and ponds and relieved the Panchayat areas of difficulties due to water scarcity.

56 Travancore-Cochin Administration Report for the year 1125 M.E. 17 August 1949 to 31 March 1950, Trivandrum,1951, p. 87.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
question of making permanent arrangement for regular water supply engaged the attention of the Department.\textsuperscript{60}

Through the Co-operative Societies manures were supplied to the people of the Panchayats. Supply of manures at reasonable price was helpful to the villagers because they could easily purchase manure for agricultural purposes.\textsuperscript{61} Most of the village unions and Panchayats promoted “grow more food campaign” by giving necessary advice and demonstrations to the agriculturists. The encouragement given by various organizations for the improvement of livestock was noteworthy. Encouragement was also given for cottage industries such as weaving, poultry farming and cultivation of plantains.\textsuperscript{62}

The propaganda officers of the Department gave instructions and advice to the villagers and night school teachers regarding the means and methods of popularizing and carrying out adult education scheme. There was provision for 134 night schools in the village uplift centres.\textsuperscript{63} Reading rooms and libraries were constructed in several village unions.\textsuperscript{64}

The Panchayats got the power to collect profession tax, house tax, vehicle tax, license fee and land tax. Land tax was a tax on taxable lands in

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Travancore-Cochin Administration Report 1953-1954}, Trivandrum, 1955, p. 182.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{62} \textit{Travancore–Cochin Administration Report for the year 1125 M.E. 17 August 1949 to 31 March 1950}, Trivandrum, 1951, p. 88.
\textsuperscript{63} \textit{Travancore-Cochin Administration Report 1950}, Trivandrum, 1951, p. 87.
\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Travancore-Cochin News}, Vol. III, 1 March 1953, p. 67.
Panchayat area at the rate of 1½ paise for every four cents of land. Because of this land tax in Panchayat area, there was no property tax (tax on buildings and premises put together) in Panchayat areas. House tax was assessed and collected by the Panchayats on the basis of the net annual rental value of the houses. In South Travancore there were full time Bill Collectors for a group of Village Panchayats.

The Public Health Organiser supervised the work of the midwives. The midwives paid house to house visits, attended to post-natal and pre-natal cases and delivery cases, examined and gave advice to pregnant women. There were Child Welfare Centres in some of the Panchayats. Parents were taught how to keep themselves and their children clean.

Panchayat election

In 1953 Panchayat elections were conducted according to the Panchayat Bill of 15 August 1952. The first Panchayat election held in South Travancore after independence was on 15 August 1953. With the aim of conducting Panchayat Elections during 1952 a sum of three lakhs rupees was provided in the budget of 1951 for the printing and supply of

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67 Gopalakrishnan, M., op.cit., p. 763. In Tamil Nadu the collection of various taxes due to the Panchayats was entrusted to the Village Administrative Officer.
Panchayat electoral rolls. Any citizen who had completed 25 years of age was eligible to contest in the election. His name should be found in the voters list of that village. Rules and regulations were framed and all arrangements were made to conduct the election peacefully.

The constitution of the Panchayats and the division of each into wards were completed in 1952. The ward-wise electoral rolls were published in 2 March 1953. The Assistant Directors of the Panchayats were the election authorities by statute and they were in charge of the polling material. Conferences of election officers were held in the district offices to give instructions to the polling staff. The elections were conducted very peacefully with police arrangement.

After conducting the elections peacefully results were announced. The Panchayats began to function on Independence Day, the 15 August 1953 and the Panchayat Raj week was celebrated. Public meetings were held in which the objects of the Panchayats were explained to the people. Processions were taken out, sports were conducted and poor feeding was arranged during the celebrations. Clean up campaign, widening of roads and construction of new roads were among the activities organized during

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70 Gopalakrishnan, M., op.cit., p. 735.
73 Ibid.
the week. The enthusiasm shown by the villagers and the contribution of voluntary manual labour augured well for the Panchayats.\textsuperscript{74}

According to the Panchayat Act of 1950 the number of Panchayats to be established in each taluk was thirty two in Vilavancode taluk, thirty three in Kalkulam taluk, thirty four in Thovalai taluk and thirty five in Agasthiswaram taluk of South Travancore.\textsuperscript{75} Even though such estimates were prepared that number of Panchayats were not founded. William member of the Legislative Assembly had mentioned in the Assembly in 1955 that eighteen Panchayats were functioning in Vilavancode taluk.\textsuperscript{76} Instead of the sanctioned thirty two only eighteen Panchayats were established in Vilavancode taluk.

Each taluk had one Section Officer and one Overseer to supervise the activities of the Panchayats. William was representing to the Government that these two officers were not sufficient to inspect or check the activities of all the Panchayats in the taluks. He was requesting to appoint more section officers to prepare estimates or to bring four or five Panchayats under one section officer and to supervise the administrative affairs of the Panchayats.\textsuperscript{77}

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{76} Proceedings of the Travancore-Cochin Legislative Assembly, 6 April 1955, p. 1366.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
Thus the local administrations of the villages were managed by the village Panchayats. Minor disputes were also settled by the village Panchayat courts. Even though village autonomy was given to the villages their activities were checked, audited and supervised by the Government officials as the representatives of the Government. So the local self-Government functioned well in South Travancore.

Municipalities

In South Travancore just like the village is the smallest unit of administration as far as the local self-Government is concerned, the towns were administered by the municipalities and the common problems of the people residing in the towns were settled locally. The four Municipal towns of South Travancore were Nagercoil, Colachel, Padmanabhapuram and Kuzhithurai.\(^78\) Nagercoil Municipality was situated in Agasthiswaram taluk, Padmanabhapuram and Colachel Municipalities in Kalkulam taluk and Kuzhithurai Municipality in Vilavancode taluk.\(^79\)

In 1878 a set of rules were passed which governed sanitation and other matters connected with the improvement of towns. The Act of 1894 was the earliest legislation relating to local self-Government in


Travancore.\textsuperscript{80} This Act provided for the conservancy and improvement of towns, created town improvement committees and town funds; but the powers of the committees were limited and their duties confined to the supervision of sanitary arrangements. The committees had no power of taxation.\textsuperscript{81}

According to the Act of 1894 five committees were established throughout Travancore. Among the five committees Nagercoil Municipal Committee was the one formed in South Travancore.\textsuperscript{82} The committee consisted of local officials and non-officials. As per the regulation, a fund known as the Town Improvement Committee Fund was created.\textsuperscript{83} The duties of the committees were confined to the supervision of the sanitary arrangements alone in the town. The committees had no power of taxation.\textsuperscript{84}

Later the scope of the committees was widened and they were entrusted with the maintenance of public wells, public conveniences, street lights and provision of roads. In the years that followed, duties such as provision of private scavenging, traffic regulations, provisions of public health also were assigned to the Town Improvement Committees. The Committees were also authorized to levy and collect certain local taxes like

\textsuperscript{80} Travancore Administration Report 1945-1946, Trivandrum, 1947, p. 160.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., Travancore Administration Report, 1937-1938, Trivandrum, 1939, p. 211.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., Gopalakrishnan, M., \textit{op.cit.}, P. 733 and Velu Pillai, T.K., \textit{op.cit.}, Vol. IV, p. 238.
\textsuperscript{84} Velu Pillai, T.K., Vol. IV, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 240.
house tax.\textsuperscript{85} The rate payers of the Town Improvement Committee of Nagercoil along with some other towns of Travancore were allowed the privilege of electing four non official members for their committee.\textsuperscript{86}

During 1913, the Town of Colachel and Padmanabhapuram were also provided with Town Improvement Committees. One of the prime functions of these committees was specified as the prevention of epidemics.\textsuperscript{87} The presidents of the committees were vested with powers of inspecting and controlling the manufacture of food materials. The supervision of the cattle pounds also was brought under the control of the committees.\textsuperscript{88}

In the year 1914, a Town Improvement Committee was set up in Kuzhithurai also.\textsuperscript{89} In 1919 the privilege of electing the non-official members was extended to all the Town Improvement Committees of the state and all the committees had non-official majorities. Accordingly in 1920 non-official President was appointed to the Nagercoil Town Improvement Committee along with some other committees of the state.\textsuperscript{90}

**The Municipal Act of Travancore – 1920**

In 1920 the Municipal Act of Travancore State was passed. The Act was drafted in line with the Madras District Municipalities Act 1884 and the

\textsuperscript{85} Sreedhara Menon, *op.cit.*, pp. 624-625.
\textsuperscript{86} Velu Pillai, T.K., *op.cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 240.
\textsuperscript{88} Gopalakrishnan, M., *op.cit.*, p. 733.
\textsuperscript{89} *Ibid.*
\textsuperscript{90} Velu Pillai, T.K., *op.cit.*, p. 241.
Punjab Municipalities Act 1891. The Act of 1920 provided better provisions for the organization and administration of Municipal towns. Arrangements were also made for providing better educational, public health and other facilities to the public.

The maximum and minimum number of official and non-official members in the Municipal Committees and the obligatory and discretionary powers of the committees were defined in the Act. According to the provisions of the Act, maintenance of roads in the municipal area, streets lighting, public health including cleaning of streets, registration of births and deaths, education activities, public parks and recreation centres came under the purview of the Municipalities. The privilege of electing non-official Presidents were allowed to all the municipal councils except the Colachel Municipality in South Travancore.

In 1921 two municipal conferences were organized which were attended by the presidents of all the municipal councils in the state. The powers of the Presidents in regard to appointments were enhanced and the pay of the establishments was revised. According to the resolution of the municipal conference Government considered the question of the transfer of the roads in the municipal towns from P.W.D. to the respective

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92 Gopalakrishnan, M., *op.cit.*, p. 734.
94 Gopalakrishnan, M., *op.cit.*, p. 734.
municipalities. As a tentative measure the minor roads and streets in the Nagercoil town were transferred to the Municipal Council for a period of five years.96

The Travancore District Municipalities Act of 1941

The Travancore District Municipalities Act of 1941 was intended to stimulate the efficient progress of municipal administration. On the basis of the Madras Municipalities Act of 1919 this Act was formulated.97 According to this Act all Municipalities constituted limits defined, committees established, appointments, rules, regulations, by-laws and orders made, notifications and notices issued, taxes, tolls, rates and fees imposed or assessed, contracts entered into and suits and other proceedings instituted, defined, established, made, issued, imposed or assessed entered into and instituted under the Act.98

This Act dealt with the constitution of the municipal councils which comprised members partly elected by the rate payers and partly nominated by the Government the elected members forming the majority. Among the nominated members some were officials and the others non-officials. All the municipal councils had the right of electing their chairmen who might be

96 Ibid.
chosen either from among the members or from outside.\textsuperscript{99} According to the census of 1941, the area comprised within the limits of the municipalities was roughly 102 sq. miles with a total population of 494,732.\textsuperscript{100} As per this Act the former Town Improvement Committees were reconstituted as Municipalities. Accordingly the four Municipalities of Nagercoil, Padmanabhapuram, Kuzhithurai and Colachel were constituted. In 1946, the official heads of the municipalities, designated as Commissioners, were appointed.\textsuperscript{101}

On certain occasions the Government extended the term of office of the councilors due to some emergency situations in the state. On 5 June 1946 the Travancore District Municipalities Act was passed which extended the term of office of the councilors.\textsuperscript{102}

**Municipal Council**

The Municipal Councils composed elected members. In 1953 elections were conducted on the basis of adult franchise.\textsuperscript{103} Seats were reserved in the councils giving due representation to scheduled castes and

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid and *Travancore-Cochin Administration Report for the year 1125 M.E., 17 August 1949 to 31 March 1950*, p. 125.
\textsuperscript{101} Sreedhara Menon, A., *op. cit.*, p. 623.
\textsuperscript{102} Supplement to the Travancore Government Gazette No. 48 dated 11 June 1948, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{103} *Travancore Information and Listener*, Vol. IX, September 1948, p. 133.
scheduled tribes. Commissioners appointed by Government were functioning as executive authorities in the Municipalities.\textsuperscript{104}

The main function of the municipal administration continued to be the care of sanitation and public health. The other obligatory functions were, lighting of public streets, vaccination and registration of births and deaths. The other important activities of the Councils were conducting markets, leper clinics, maternity and child welfare centres, maintaining parks, running of libraries and reading rooms and subsidizing of vaidyasalas.\textsuperscript{105}

**The Functions of the Municipalities**

The functions of the four municipalities of South Travancore were more or less the same as in other parts of India. Since 1920 Nagercoil has been a municipal town and was the biggest in South Travancore.\textsuperscript{106} The jurisdiction of this municipality spread over an area of 24.27.k.m. Padmanabhapuram, where there were vestiges of Venad kings, was constituted as a Municipality in the year 1920 under the Travancore Municipal Act. The office of the municipality was located at Thuckalay.


\textsuperscript{106} The Nagercoil Municipality was upgraded to Selection grade in 1978. (Gopalakrishnan, M., *op.cit.*, p. 739.)
The municipality had jurisdiction over an area of 6.47 sq.k.m, included portions of Kalkulam and Thuckalay revenue village. This municipality continues to remain as a third grade municipality.\textsuperscript{107}

Kuzhithurai, which was constituted as a Town Improvement Committee in 1914 was, formed as a full-fledged Municipality thereafter, as per the provisions of the Travancore Municipalities Act, 1920. Till 31 March 1959 this Municipality continued to function under the Travancore Municipalities Act of 1920. From 1 April 1959, this Municipality along with other municipalities of South Travancore was brought under the purview of the TamilNadu District Municipalities Act, 1920.\textsuperscript{108}

Kuzhithurai Municipality had jurisdiction over the portions of the revenue villages of Vilavancode, Nalloor and Palcode of Vilavancode taluk, which altogether formed a total area of 5.22 sq.km. This municipality has continued to remain as III grade, since its constitution. Colachel, a port-town on the Western Coast, was constituted as a municipality as early as 1920. It came under the Kalkulam taluk of South Travancore.\textsuperscript{109} The jurisdiction of this municipality spread over an area of 5.78 sq. km.\textsuperscript{110}

\textsuperscript{107} Gopalakrishnan, M., \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 742-743.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., p. 748.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., p. 745.
Annual Income

All the Municipalities had income from various sources like taxes on vehicles, water tax, rates and rent from public buildings. The financial position of the Nagercoil municipality was very sound and healthy. During 1921-1922, the annual income of this municipality was Rs.2076.\textsuperscript{111} In 1951-1952 the revenue of the municipality was Rs.3,61,142 and the expenditure was Rs. 4,82,405. The fund balance at the close of the year was Rs.1,51,908. This was a Municipality in Group I.\textsuperscript{112}

The incidence of taxation in the form of rates and taxes alone was the highest in Nagercoil.\textsuperscript{113} Property tax was levied at the aggregate of twelve and a half percent of the annual rental value. Tax for general purposes, lighting tax, water tax and scavenging tax were included under property tax. Profession tax, entertainment tax, advertisement tax and license fees were the other sources of income.\textsuperscript{114} Since the municipalities had various obligations, more expenditure also incurred. As far as the financial position of the municipality was concerned, during 1953 the Municipal Council had to pay annually, out of its funds a sum exceeding a lakh of rupees (or about a third of its revenue collection) to meet its liabilities. The remaining two thirds of its revenue were hardly sufficient to meet its normal requirements.

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid. The annual income of the Municipality in 1987-1988 was Rs. 1,95,00,000.
\textsuperscript{112} Report on the Investigation into the Finances of Local Bodies of the Travancore-Cochin State 1953, Ernakulam, 1954, p. 43.
\textsuperscript{113} Travancore Administration Report, 1926-27, Trivandrum, 1928, p. 172.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., pp. 43-44.
and left a prescribed working balance. Further the payment of higher rates of wages to the municipal workers as a result of the fixing of the minimum wages by the committee entailed heavy expenditure from municipal funds.\textsuperscript{115}

During 1921-1922 the annual income of the Municipality of Kuzhithurai was Rs. 6,6,73 and it rose to Rs. 94,890 in 1961-1962.\textsuperscript{116} The revenue in the form of rates and taxes was the highest in Kuzhithurai Municipality and the lowest in Colachel.\textsuperscript{117} The financial condition of the municipality was not sound, with the result that it still continues to remain as a third grade municipality.\textsuperscript{118} During the year 1957-1958 the annual income of the Municipality from various sources was Rs. 33,772.\textsuperscript{119} The income from rates and taxes of this Municipality was the lowest in South Travancore.\textsuperscript{120} In 1921-1922 the year after the constitution of the Municipality of Padmanabhapuram its income was Rs. 5,141.\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{115} Report on the Investigation into the Finances of Local Bodies of the Travancore-Cochin State, 1953, Ernakulam, 1954, p. 45.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{117} Travancroe Administration Report 1926-1927, Trivandrum, 1928, p. 172.
\textsuperscript{118} Gopalakrishnan, M., op.cit., p. 745.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{120} Travancore Administration Report 1937-1938, Trivandrum, 1939, p. 215.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., During the year 1985-1986 the income of the Padmanabhapuram Municipality rose to Rs. 10,53,214/-.
Water Supply

Only Trivandrum and Nagercoil Municipalities had protected water supply. The source of protected water supply to Nagercoil Municipality was the Mukkudal dam situated fifteen kilometers to the North of the town. The water pumped out of the dam was treated with chlorine or other purifiers in the filter house built in Krishnankoil. Drinking water was supplied on alternate days.

The Nagercoil Water Supply Scheme was named as the Marthandavarma Water works. This water supply scheme was financed by the Government and one half of the outlay was treated as Government contribution and the other half as loan to the Municipal Council, repayable with interest in easy instalments.

In 1945 the Marthandavarma Water Works, Nagercoil was completed and it was inaugurated by His Highness the Elaya Raja (Mithunam 6,1120 M.E). During the year 1945 three hundred and ninety two street taps were erected of which two hundred and ten street taps were given connection.

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123 Ibid.
The remaining connections were not given due to the delay in getting the necessary materials from abroad for which orders were placed.125

A loan of Rs.11,04,159.34 being half the outlay on the water supply scheme was undertaken at Government cost and water works maintenance charges. According to the Government Order of 1953 the loan on account of water supply scheme repayable in sixty years, at three and a half percent per annum, and amount of each installment was Rs.44,264.34. In 1953 this municipality was not a defaulter according to the terms of 1953 governing repayment.126 Water supply was effected not only to the Nagercoil Municipal area but also, to the other towns which were situated along the pipe lines from Mukkudal to Nagercoil. The other towns benefited were Boothapandi, Thuvarankadu, Vilangadu, Esanthimangalam, Erachakulam, Putheri, Suchindrum and Kanyakumari.127

Protected water supply system was not introduced in Padamanabapuram, Kuzhithrai and Colachel Municipalities. Most of the residents had their own water facilities.128

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126 Report on the Investigation into the Finances of Local Bodies of the Travancore-Cochin State, 1953, Eranakulam, 1954, p. 44.
127 Kanyakumari township has its own water supply schemes besides the Mukkudal water. (Gopalakrishnan, M., op.cit., p. 740.)
128 Ibid.
Maintenance of Roads

A large number of roads were maintained in all the municipalities to safeguard the welfare of the people of South Travancore. This Municipality maintained a good number of cement, black topped and metalled roads and streets. During 1927 a scheme was undertaken by the Nagercoil Municipal Council to relieve congestion by acquiring open sites and laying out streets.

During 1932 only eight out of the nineteen Municipalities of the state had the privilege of levying tolls on vehicle traffic on roads. Nagercoil Municipality was one of the eight Municipalities which levied tolls on road traffic. The number of tollgates under Nagercoil Municipality where exemption allowed was the gates at Anapalam (near Edalakudy), Parakai, Dharmapuram road (Ethamozhy road), Rajakkamangalam road, Fridaymarket road, Nadukattumadan road, Vetturnimadam road, Putheri road and Ozhuganasery Bridge. For different vehicles different rates were levied. Not more than a single payment of toll was demanded in respect of any vehicle or animal during any one period of twenty four hours counted from midnight to midnight. The Municipalities of Padmanabhapuram,

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129 Ibid.
Kuzhithrai and Colachel also maintained black-topped, metalled and earthen roads.\textsuperscript{132}

**Health and Hygiene**

The Municipalities also paid attention to the maintenance of good health and hygiene among the people. The health visitors in the Nagercoil Municipality did useful maternity and child welfare work.\textsuperscript{133} During 1927 three women were trained in midwifery and nursing at the cost of the Municipality of Nagercoil in the interests of maternity and child welfare work. From the beginning of 1928 they were employed as Health Visitors.\textsuperscript{134} Four child welfare centres were maintained by the Municipality.\textsuperscript{135} The Nagercoil Municipal Council also continued to maintain a leper clinic for the treatment of the lepers.\textsuperscript{136} Sanitary Inspectors, Sanitary Supervisors, Sweepers, Scavengers and Drain Cleaners were the members of the staff who were under the administrative control of the Municipal Health Officer.\textsuperscript{137} Kuzhithurai Municipality employed midwives.\textsuperscript{138} They continued to do useful maternity and child welfare work. A Primary Health Centre was also maintained under this Municipality.\textsuperscript{139}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{132} Gopalakrishnan, M., *op.cit.*, p. 743.
\item \textsuperscript{133} *Travancore Administration Report 1937-1938*, Trivandrum, 1939, p. 215.
\item \textsuperscript{134} *Travancore Administration Report 1926-1927*, Trivandrum, 1928, p. 172.
\item \textsuperscript{135} Report on the Investigation into the Finances of Local Bodies of the Travancore-Cochin State, 1953, p.44.
\item \textsuperscript{136} *Travancore Administration Report 1937-1938*, Trivandrum, 1939, p. 215.
\item \textsuperscript{137} Gopalakrishnan, M., *op.cit.*, p. 741.
\item \textsuperscript{138} *Ibid.*
\end{itemize}
Miscellaneous

Besides the above mentioned functions, various other activities were also carried on in the municipalities. A Destitute Home was run by the Nagercoil Municipality for the welfare of the destitutes\(^{140}\) which was managed by a local committee and a monthly contribution of Rs. 500 was being paid from the Municipal funds.\(^{141}\) In 1930 sanction was accorded for the prominent roads within the Municipal town of Nagercoil being provided with electric lights.\(^{142}\) There were seven markets under its control of which five were public markets and two private markets.\(^{143}\) The municipality was maintaining a library and reading room, a park and a tower clock.\(^{144}\) The Municipality of Padmanabhapuram maintained one night school.\(^{145}\) This Municipality also maintained two libraries and reading rooms as well as a primary school.\(^{146}\) Mr. William an Advocate of Marthandam was elected Chairman of the Kuzhithurai Municipal Council continuously for three terms and worked for the development of Kuzhithurai Municipality. Due to his hard work and efforts supply of electricity was introduced for the people

\(^{141}\) *Report on the Investigation into the Finances of Local Bodies of the Travancore-Cochin State*, 1953, p. 44.
\(^{142}\) Velu Pillai, T.K., *op.cit.*, p. 44.
\(^{143}\) *Report on the Investigation into the Finances of Local Bodies of the Travancore-Cochin State*, 1953, Ernakulam, 1954, p. 44.
\(^{144}\) *Ibid.*
of Kuzhithurai Municipal area. Irrigation facilities and new roads were also widened in the area.\textsuperscript{147}

On 26 December 1936 Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar the Dewan of Travancore visited Padmanabhapuram when he made a tour in the South Travancore. The Dewan appreciated the services of municipalities and local bodies.\textsuperscript{148}

Village Panchayats and Municipalities functioned well in South Travancore. Local administration was carried on smoothly with the supervision of the State Government. The rulers of Travancore passed Acts, rules and regulations often to strengthen and improve the local self-Government. Local administration was not a severe problem for them since the people also co-operated with them. Under the able leadership of the rulers the people were also satisfied with the local administration of their areas. They abided by the rules and regulations and lived peacefully.

\textsuperscript{147} Ibid. and Ponniah, P.J., \textit{op.cit.}, p. 32.