Chapter IV

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS

Political Problems

In India political parties involved themselves in civic administration during the non-cooperation movement led by Mahatma Gandhi. In U.P. the municipal elections of 1922 were contested on political basis because Swarajists wanted to come in majority. While in 1923 the non-cooperators gained majority in municipal elections. In 1925, however, the election turned largely on communal and personal lines. On the other hand during 1923 in Bengal the Swarajists gained majority in Calcutta elections and they adopted a dictatorial policy and are reported "to have established a dictatorship of which the main feature is described as the subordination of civic administration to political and party ends."\(^1\)

These dictatorial policies continued only for a short duration. In 1930 these policies were done away within most of the provinces. From this time (1930) onward up to independence

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various parties participated in the elections on personal or communal basis.

It has been seen that local self-government institutions have been regarded as the grass-roots of democracy. They are responsible for promoting public participation and developing local leadership. Apart from providing the basic civic requirements they have an important role connected with the building up civic, social and cultural life of the citizens. In a welfare state these duties have enlarged and cover specially all aspects of healthy living and purposeful development of the personality of citizens. In the modern society they are no longer traditional local authorities responsible only for sanitation of area or repair of local lanes and village schools, or developmental activities.

Political parties have of late entered into municipal government and the urban local bodies had been branded as the dens of localism, breeding places of communalism and shallow regionalism. It is a widespread and commonly held opinion that politics should not enter into local government affairs. But the fact remains that these political parties are involved in municipal affairs and have failed to take any concrete steps for the development of civic programme.

The question however, arises whether the party system is necessary at local level, or to put it differently, whether the
political parties are necessary for running the local institutions. Mr. Sanjiva Reddy, while speaking at Ahmedabad at a civic reception, has observed that, "there is no room for party politics in civic reception and the civic problems could at the best be taken by non-party approach." Mr. Jaya Prakash Narayan has also expressed the same views regarding local government. The primary duty of the civic body is to look into the civic problems and work for the community as a whole. The problems of the civic body can best be solved by nonpartisan and cooperative manner. This view, however, neglected some basic social, economic and political facts which have developed in our society. It is difficult for the people to be exempt from party politics at the local level when they elect their representative at central and state levels on party basis. The local self-government is known a government which involves an element of power and power is best represented and controlled by party than an isolated individuals. Individuals cannot be effective and cannot shape policies unless backed by the parties. It is a well known fact that party system plays an important role in building up leadership at the local level. It is an interesting thing that we praise enthusiastically party system at the central and state level in the interest of democracy but we dislike and discourage party system at the local government level especially in the elections of municipal

corporations and municipalities. We expect from the voter in general elections of centre and state to cast their vote for the party. But at the same time we are advised not to cast their vote for those who are contesting election for the local bodies at the party level. It should be absolutely clear that if we consider party politics good for the centre or the state we should apply the same criterion to the civic bodies because the voters are the same and should be judged from the same angle.

It is said that due to adoption of party politics in local bodies there is an adverse effect on the civic management and local administration. In many urban civic bodies, the representatives have shown an irresistible tendency to divide along party lines and insist on passing meaningless resolutions on national, political and even more aridly foreign policy issues.¹ It is a main effect can be seen as a hinderance in the smooth functioning of local bodies because the policies are made on the basis of main party's interest rather than people interest. It is necessary for the smooth functioning of local bodies that policies and rules should be framed purely for its well-beings. It is also seen that the policies for employees of municipal corporation are also formed in the light of party politics as a result the moral and efficiency of municipal

¹ The Hindustan Times (New Delhi), December 29, 1976.
employees also suffer. Moreover, the major political parties remain engaged in the opposing and contradicting each other with the result that instead of planning for prosperity and efficient administration the municipal bodies are turned into battleground.

A healthy party system based on major and responsible political parties helps to solve problems more from the standpoint of larger interest of the community rather than from the narrow, sectarian angle. All political parties advise for themselves a code of conduct as a means to self-disciplinary measure shunning petty, sectarian and selfish approach in matters of common concern to the community. Political parties can, as they do on certain, levels work for the consensus to promote collective interest of the community without sacrificing the legitimate interest of the individual. In our view, such disciplinary code of conduct is not impossible though may be somewhat difficult. In modern days, with the spread of political consciousness and education of the people for the good of the community party democracy at the local government level can be success though there are bound to be some complications. Let us not decry or oppose the role of political party in the governance of the local community. We must endeavour for the improvement of the party democracy.

The elections for the local bodies should be conducted in a spirit of impartiality and fairplay, because, it is a process by
virtue of which the representatives are elected to municipal councils and made responsible for the running of the civic administration. It is, therefore, very essential that the persons elected for the local bodies should be honest and efficient.

In the present day infra structure of party government we cannot dispense with the role of political parties both vertically and horizontally. Whether we will it or not. There is a network of party agencies and we cannot do without them, much more so in big towns and municipal corporations where the boundaries of constituencies for parliament or state Vidhan Sabha with the same leadership operating at all levels. Political parties are indispensable and some times cut across the boundaries of state, centre and local bodies. Moreover, municipal corporations look up to the states legislatives for finances and political support from time to time.

**Administrative Problems**

Since the close of the Second World War, there has been a visible decline in the condition of urban life in the country. Our late Prime Minister Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru had once remarked:

"Local administration is the foundation of our democracy and very rightly it is so. A democracy at the top cannot be a success until the foundation on which the super-
structure rests is strong. It is no use starting such a super imposed democracy without a proper base."\(^1\)

Municipal corporation was regarded as the topmost agency on the urban local self-government. Its main duty is to provide better civic amenities to the people. Today, municipal corporations are facing administrative problems in implementation of various programme like housing, transport, slum clearance, provision of water supply, public health and primary and secondary education. The administrative problems of the Municipal Corporations may be summed up as under:

(1) Haphazard growth of cities and rapid increase in population

Truly speaking, our cities are growing so fast that local bodies find it difficult to cope with such growth. The cities are the nerve centres of political, economic, educational and developmental activities. The big cities attract large rural population in pursuit of employment, education and recreation. The growth rate of population in big cities has generally been higher than the growth rate of population in rural areas. In fact, the corporation cities, due to their importance and opportunities of employment, etc., receive the maximum pressure of in-flux from rural areas. Moreover, the influx of population in

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the core are as of the large cities has been increasing beyond exception leading to the creation a number of problems for municipal administration. The flow of the rural people to the big cities have a number of causes. Firstly, the educated people of the rural areas do not take interest in agriculture or in rural industries. Secondly the white collar job opportunities are less in rural areas than the big cities or the industrial centres, so the poor people migrate to these centres with the hope of better prospects. Thirdly, the industries are generally established in big cities resulting the rural people attracts to these centres.

The area of the big cities is also increasing haphazardly due to the establishment of the industries in the heart of towns. It is a general phenomenon that the industrialisation and urbanisation go side by side resulting in urbanisation creates problems like housing, transportation, slum clearance, sanitation, pollution, etc.

This problem has increased due to the neglect of planning. This can be checked through planned development in a suitable manner. The pressure of population on urban areas must be lightened through the establishment of industries in different areas and tight programme of rural civic development. A serious attention should be attached to the cottage industries in the rural areas and the maximum opportunities of employment to the rural people.
(2) Financial difficulties

Lack of the financial resources is the most important factor which has been responsible for slow growth of development of corporation cities. The financial resources of the municipal corporation are below the required limit. Therefore, the municipal administration fails to provide even the basic amenities to their inhabitants.

Municipal corporation in U.P. have been functioning since February 1, 1960, after passing the U.P. Nagar-Mahapalika Adhiniyam, 1959. The main object in setting up these corporations was to strengthen their financial resources so that they could provide better services and amenities to the people. Provisions were made in the Act for the enlargement of the financial powers of these corporations.

The main financial resources of the municipal corporations are, house tax, water tax, property tax, octroi and grant-in-aid which is given by the State Government. These taxes are not collected properly and in time by the municipal administration resulting in financial set back. The grants in-aid is also not given in time. The rise in expenditure of these corporations may be attributed partly to the enlargement in their territorial jurisdiction and rise in population special requirements of town planning, slum clearance, housing, water supply, sewerage and drainage, etc., have strained their financial resources
further.

The income from property tax which is second only to Octroi and terminal tax has not gone higher. The most of the owners are paying two decades back through the expenditure of the corporation in maintaining the areas have gone up several times. In case of property tax, the corporations in U.P. are authorised to levy property tax from 15% to 25% of the annual rental value of the properties. But none of them has increased the rate upto 25 per cent because the members are afraid of losing popularity. In case of land tax and building imposed by the State Government has greatly reduced the scope for the municipal taxation. It seems illogical for the State Government to levy this tax when the municipal bodies are already levying it. A major share of these taxes go to the official functioning in that field. Corruption is rampant and about half of the money goes in the pockets of officials.

A major setback from which these municipal corporations suffer is that under the new condition, all the sources of public income are divided between the state and central government and the local bodies have not been assigned any separate resources. Thus, they have to depend on them by the State government and thus their financial strength depends on the State as such. This has made the financial position of the municipal corporation's deplorable in the economically backward states. The state government has started imposing such
taxes as were reserved since long for the municipal bodies.

The financial problem of municipal corporation can be checked if the corporations make all out efforts to maximise their tax and non-tax revenues by finding out new sources of income by exploiting the existing resources. It is the duty of the municipal corporation to collect taxes properly and in time.

The state government should examine in detail the tax structure of municipal bodies as their own responsibility. In this connection, the suggestion to have the state Municipal Finance Commission periodically on the lines of the central Finance Commission, as recommended by the Rural-Urban Relationship Committee, has been canvassed in various forums during the past few years.

In this regard much has been done but still the municipal corporations are facing the financial difficulties and the municipal administration finds itself in tight corner and is unable to provide basic vital amenities for which the corporations were established. Moreover, it is the duty of the local inhabitants that they pay their taxes properly and in due time.

(3) Misuse of Power

It is a common evil of our administration which is deep rooted in the Municipal Corporations. The tendency to jobbery in municipal appointments is not a feature peculiar to India, and
such a practice is exceedingly difficult to eradicate. In our society caste, religion and family background play an important role and these factors set back municipal administration. The appointments in the municipal corporations are generally made on the basis of personal relationship, party patronage rather than the efficiency and the academic background of the candidate. The incompetent people are appointed on various posts of the corporation resulting inefficiency in the discharge of their functions. There are many examples such as the appointments are made on the basis of gratification or personal understanding, though the appointees are not suitable for that particular job.

In municipal administration there is lack of coordination between the elected representatives and the beurocratic hierarchy. They often blame each other. The beurocratic hierarchy complained that the elected representatives exercise their influence over them. They make an unnecessary interference in the affairs of the corporation which are purely administrative in nature and are not related to them. They also complain that the local 'netas' of the city also pressurize them to work according to their will. The beurocracy in the municipal corporation have the fear of transfer so they work on the directions of them. They misuse their powers which are harmful in the interest of the municipal corporation.
(4) Lack of trained personnel

In municipal services, especially in municipal corporations there is an acute shortage of trained personnel. Because, unlike the State or Union Government services, the municipal service has not been able to provide a career prospect. Their pay scale and service conditions are also not encouraging in municipal services. The result is that the trained people do not give preference for the municipal services and the municipal corporations always remain in the hands of untrained personnel.

It is realised that the trained personnel be based on merit system (appointed municipal bureaucrats and the elected representatives) is essential for the smooth functioning of the municipal corporation. It is a crying demand that a Municipal Administrative Service is created and made to function after due training.

There is an urgent need to give training to municipal machinery. In the first step, the training of councillors and Government officials is more important. In developing countries like India, the training of councillors is more important. It is a well known fact that elected members of local councils who are starting these jobs have often not governmental experience or in general little background of local self government administration. In the developing countries, there is a shortage of experienced councillors. The training of councillors is more necessary because they do not have an established system of local self
government before their eyes, and the general background of education is much lower than in the developed countries. We might send the new councillors to local government schools for short residential courses, so that they can learn from others in the course. The tutors at these courses should themselves be expert in the field of local self government, so that they give them valuable suggestions to face the problems posed before them in the local self government. These courses should be so designed as to prove the councillors with a good understanding of the objectives and working of local self government. The training in these courses must not take to fail to take into account that these councillors must be taught proper conduct in relation to the officers and the public, because this is an element which is lacking in many newly elected councillors. These councillors will have to deal with officials on one hand, and the public other. Officials get hurt if the councillors behave rudely towards them. This will effect their morale. As councillors are elected by the public, they must conduct themselves towards the public in a befitting manner.

There is another way of training these councillors. Occasional conferences and seminars may be held by the political parties on subject concerned with local self government. The municipal journals, as for example, the Journal of the All India Institute of Local Self Government, aim to informing municipal councillors about different problems and aspects of municipal governmental
administration.

The Community Development Programmes may also include some training programmes for councillors for these schemes help to create a sense of civic responsibility.

Training of Government officials is absolutely necessary dealing with local self government in India. It would be quite essential for these officials to possess a knowledge of the principles of local self government because it is only then that they can discharge their duties efficiently. In a developing country like India for example, the local self-government play an important role in the life of the people, as such, training of a high order is essential for the government personnel dealing with local self governments. Hence, these government personnel connected with local self government be sent abroad to take part in study programmes or to get experience on the spot. The lack of experience of the councillors is a great set back to administration in our country. For example, when things go wrong with a new council, it may be the case that the members of the council are more irresponsible, than the officers. The training of councillors is most important so they efficiently discharge their functions.

It goes without saying that untrained and uneducated personnel are a drain to administration and the administration becomes
rickety, expensive and purposeless. The lethargy and slackness which is generally observed in administration is due to the shortcomings.