CHAPTER ONE.

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Social Scientists have compared India to an ethnographic museum in which variations between various linguistic divisions are so marked that they can be equated with separate nations in a continent like Europe.

Regional studies on various aspects in different states are necessary to bring individual traits and glories to the limelight.

The present study is one such attempt to specialize certain aspects of regional history to account for the origin, developments and distinctive features of Rural Local Self-Government in the state of Madras in India. It is aimed to fill an important gap in the series of studies with an stress on sources at the regional level.

The fortunes of Local Self-Government in the rural setting had always been controlled by the bureaucracy and pressure groups. It is a difficult task to have access to the exact courses from which their destinies can be recounted without any break.

Such local institutions served as ideal training grounds for would-be legislators and parliamentarians. Political parties look forward to these institutions to
pick up young people of deserving merit. Experiments on autonomy at the core level could be undertaken in these institutions. Perhaps the only possible weakness in these institutions is that they have no inherent powers to influence a wide spectrum.

The powers of the local bodies are only derivative. State governments are in virtual control of putting them into practice. If the state aims at centralisation then the first blow falls on these local bodies.

The provincial legislature and the executive government played a pivotal role in shaping and shaking the Local Self-government. The rural local bodies became significant political units and, therefore, power centres in the State. Local institutions bore the brunt of the different phases of the country's freedom movement.

It may be of interest to define certain terms that are used widely and repeatedly in this study.

Firstly "Local Self-government" is a territorial entity with a legal right to regulate its own affairs. It calls for the participation of local people in its affairs and aims at exerting resistance when the state attempts to interfere in its real powers.

Secondly the term "Rural" strictly denotes autho-
rities at the grass-root level, viz., District Boards, Taluk Boards and Village Panchayats, who do not come within the ambit of Town Panchayats and higher authorities like Municipalities and Corporations.

These terms can be applied with marked clarity for the period of specialisation viz., A.D. 1920 to 1950 mainly because they were very much in vogue and practice. It also coincided with the introduction of Dyarchy, Provincial Autonomy, Advisers' Regime, intense freedom struggle and national independence.

The geographical area of specialisation of this study is the Madras State of British days.

Sources available for this study are not only sparse but also very widely distributed. Some original sources could be consulted only after repeated visits to the State Archives and Libraries.

Primary sources are found in official records like G.O's, Reports, Proceedings of Legislatures and Gazetteers. The Proceedings in particular provide a wealth of data on the attitude, approach and functioning of the provincial government the part played by political parties as well as the development of rural local self-government in its real sense.

Government orders issued under the state authority give interesting case studies and serve as critical em-
alysis of a number of issues related to a single case. They can be taken as official versions only.

Annual Administrative Reports provided vital and statistical information on the composition, functions, powers as also instances of reconstitution and even dissolution of local bodies in the Madras State.

Reports of committees appointed by the state to investigate specific problems form another kind of primary source. They are useful to delineate various phases in the evolution and development of local bodies.

Secondary sources for the present study are very limited.

R. Venkata Raghiah in his pioneering study on the Indian Financial Policy (1963-'71) makes a specific reference to the beginnings of local taxation in Madras State. He has also authored an illuminating book on the Development of Local Boards in the Madras Presidency. The constitutional development of local boards, state control and supervision, expenditure on local boards as well as the sources of revenue for the local boards are dealt with in great detail.

K. Jeyarajan, a seasoned researcher and administrator in his Study of Panchayats in Madras has reviewed the activities of the Panchayats in Madras State up to 1947.
His emphasis is on the constitution, functioning, finance and powers of the Panchayats. He has unfortunately ignored the political side completely.

V. Venkata Rao's work *Administration of District Boards in Madras Presidency* is an in-depth study on the administrative aspects. He makes casual reference to the role of legislature and legislators and the working of District Boards. His *Hundred Years of Local Self-Government (1850-1950)* is an exhaustive treatise on the local government machinery and personnel management. He makes only incidental references to 'political apathy' and 'political subjugation'.

Another research work on the present topic is the *History of Local Self-Government in Madras Presidency (1850-1919)* by K.F. Pillay. As indicated by the title this work is only on the historical aspects of the local bodies. Political dimensions are not given their due importance.

The latest attempt in this field is a two-volume work on the *Madras Panchayat System*. The first volume by S. Saraswatí is a 'probe' into the historical perspective of the Panchayat system while the second volume by Dharampal provides a framework for its functioning.

Thus it is clear that all the secondary sources cited above dwell on the constitutional, administrative or functional aspects of local self-government. The political side is probed in this dissertation.
Besides delineating the historical growth of rural local self-government during A.D. 1920-50 adequate emphasis has been laid on the political factors too. Thus the very foundation of the system is visible in its kaleidoscopic beauty.

The dissertation is divided into two parts for reasons of clarity.

The first part gives a historical account of the origin, fortunes, growth and development of the rural local self-government from about third century B.C. Two chapters included in the first part carry the story of the Local Self Government upto A.D. 1920.

In the second part is a systematic and original attempt to assess the development of rural local self-government in the State of Madras from A.D. 1920 to 1950. Four chapters that comprise the second part deal with respectively the Dyarchy, the District Boards, Taluk Boards and the Village Panchayats. All the chapters are clearly documented and interpretative in character.

A critical analysis of the sources has enabled this writer to come to some definite conclusions. They are given in the last chapter.

Two Appendices are included in the end on the names of Governors, Chief Ministers and Ministers of the period of specialisations as well as the list of
important Acts.

Since the study has to refer to some sources repeatedly specific abbreviations have been used to maintain uniformity while citing them for reference. A list of such abbreviations is given at the beginning of the dissertation.

A Select Bibliography is added at the end of the work.