CHAPTER - VII

The Problem of Local Autonomy
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THE PROBLEM OF LOCAL AUTONOMY

It is commonly believed that autonomy in the case of local institutions is a misnomer. Local Bodies everywhere are subordinate to State authorities. Brought into existence by an Act passed by the State Legislature, the local Government is a creature of the State Government. The State Legislation under which it has been established determines the degrees of autonomy and spells out the mechanism of control to be exercised by the Provincial Government.1 The Local Self-government formed and operated between 1922 and 1920 was based considerably on the British Model and was a restrictive sort of local Government which smacked of excessive controls and regulations.

The problem of local autonomy has been hotly debated subject. The advocates of Official Control argue that the local institutions owe their origin to and wholly derive their rights from the legislature without which they cannot exist. On the other hand, the supporters of local autonomy stoutly protest against the vast powers granted by the Government to the local bodies. They hold that the ultimate purpose of Local Self-government is defeated under a system of paternal control and supervision2. State control is believed to retrade real independence and local initiative. Practical experience, particularly in India, made it unmistakably clear that a certain measure of control by the Government is indispensable.

1. S.R. Maheswari, Local Government in India, op.cit., p.281
2. Sidney Web: Grant-in-Aid, London, 1920, p.6
Over the years Local Self-government has become a part of responsible Government system of our country. So, it should emerge and grow as a field of creativity. Well-organised and efficiently functioning local bodies are necessary for the successful working of democracy at the Central and State levels. The expansion of the Governmental activities in various fields of public welfare, needs to be equitably shared with the local government at the grassroot level. The relation between the State Government and the local bodies should be a partnership of two active and co-operative members. A local Government, established by the people, has a right to survive. It is the responsibility of the Government to see that local bodies are efficiently organised, function properly and contribute to national development. The good of the state efforts vis-a-vis the Local Bodies should be their development into efficient instruments of administration, capable of formulating policies and of executing them.

The need for State Control over the local bodies cannot be minimised. First of all, certain functions undertaken by the Rural Boards are of more than local importance, being semi-national in character like Public Health and Education. Secondly the rights, duties and jurisdiction of one local body might come into conflict with those of the others. Thirdly, the local bodies do not possess knowledge and experience of administrative matters as the Government

3. K. Ursula Hicks; Development From Below, Exford, 1961, p.437
does. With an establishment of staff endowed with greater resources and expertise the central authority is better placed to utilise the available talents.5

Financial constraints of the Local Bodies make them depend on the Government for resources to undertake expensive developmental works. The Grants-in-aid policy was typical of this dependence. Tapping of local sources by means of taxation is a vexatious job which the local bodies like to perform for fear of opposition. The Government had to enforce the imposition and collection of such taxes in the rural areas.6 When the local bodies became sectarian or parochial, it is the Governmental interference that will ensure justice to the deprived sections. Rural Boards may fall a prey to favourisitism/nepotism and corruption. People in such cases look up to the Government for protection. The Government does not want the nascent local bodies to collapse under mismanagement.7

EVOLUTION OF STATE CONTROL

In the early stages, Government officials presided over The Local Bodies. The Government had confidence in their efficiency and hence they enjoyed considerable amount of freedom within their stipulated sphere of activity. Even a rigid system of inspection of District Municipalities and Local Funds Circles was absent before 1871. With

the expansion of the Local Bodies their functions and revenues increased. A more systematic allocation of duties and rights was needed. Improvised customs and practices were replaced by well-defined rules and regulations.8

The Local Boards Act IV of 1871 laid down, for the first time, comprehensive provisions of control to be exercised by the Provincial authorities on the Local Fund Boards. Section III of the Act gave the Government the powers to frame rules and restrictions in the expenditure of Municipal funds. But the Municipalities still enjoyed a large measure of freedom.9

The Government controlled the Circle Boards, established under the Act of 1871 through legislative and administrative orders of the provisional executive, namely the Governor-in-Council.

The territorial limits of the Circles were fixed by the Government who can modify their powers and jurisdiction. The governor appointed the members of the Boards and could remove them from office.10 While the District Collector was the Ex-Officio President of the Boards, its Vice-President was nominated by the Governor. Again, he determined the number, the salaries and the qualifications of the staff to be appointed under each Board.11 The Governor wielded extra-ordinary

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10. The Local Funds Act of 1871. Section 4
11. ibid., Section: 24
powers in the field of finance. He had to select and levy the taxes and rates. He alone decided the rate at which the house-tax had to be levied. The estimates prepared by the Local Board had to receive the Governor's sanction. The Governor could direct one Local Board to contribute towards the expenses of another. Even in the field of education, the Governor had controlling powers.

When Lord Ripon urged for a large measure of freedom to the local bodies, the Provincial authorities resented such a move. Ripon himself had to include certain external forms of control over the local institutions to placate the official circles. All controls had to be exercised from without and there should be no prepondering official element among the Board members. Ripon's Resolution of 1882 urged that the sanction of the Government should be required to give validity to certain acts, such as raising loans, the imposition of taxes, alienation of property, interference with any matter involving religious question or matters affecting public place. Ripon even authorised the Provincial Government to set aside resolutions of local bodies in particular cases, suspend them for gross neglect of duty and supersede——

12. ibid., Section:36
13. ibid., Section:27
14. ibid., Section:32
15. House of Commons Returns, East India (Local Government) 15-3-1883 P.136 Para.27
sion to be reserved as a final weapon to be used by the Supreme Government.

Ripon's Resolutions were recommendary in character. The Board of Revenue of the Madras Presidency favoured the removal of official control gradually. The Local Self-government Committee of Madras Government, appointed in 1882, preferred to follow the view of the Board of Revenue. In these circumstances the Local Boards Act of 1884 tended to enlarge the scope of State Control. It was feared that the elective system might lead to the damage of the efficiency of administration of local bodies. Finally the Act of 1884 provided for financial and administrative control over the local bodies in a more stringent fashion. The Act gave freedom to the Local Boards only in the field of initiative and not of final action. The Collector was granted extraordinary powers. The control of the Provincial Government over the local bodies conferred by the Act of 1884 were excessive. No instrument was left unused for keeping the Local Boards in complete subordination to the Provincial Government.

The Decentralisation Commission of 1906 pointed out that the Governmental control over the local institutions was rather excessive in the Madras Presidency which might hinder the progress of local Self-Government. The Commission recommended a general relaxation of control. The Commission's proposals were embodied in Act IV of 1919.

17. Local Boards Act of 1884: Section 144
and in Acts V and XIV of 1920. The Commission had emphasised that service paid for by the Boards should also be controlled by them. It also said that Grants-in-aid by the Government should not be granted for taking over the entire management of such a service. The commission suggested that instead of control and interference, the Provincial Government should rely more on the mechanism of advice and helpful assistance of inspection of the Board's work from time to time. 20

SYSTEM AND FORMS OF CONTROL

The control of the State government over the Local Boards is quite extensive. The forms of control exercised by the Government from 1871 and more particularly from 1885 onwards related to legislative, financial and administrative matters. There was also some judicial control because according to law, the local authority is treated like any other corporation of individual.21 The objects of executive control over the local bodies were explained. They were 1) to protect them from internal dissensions and safeguard the minority interests 2) to protect them from external aggression by neighbouring local bodies. 3) to guide them spend their funds properly 4) to prevent any activity which might be harmful to the residents 5) to prevent excessive taxation not leaving any source for the Central fund. 6) to prevent local bodies from pledging their future unnecessarily 7) to regulate the grants and 8) to maintain minimum standards of efficiency.22

20. Recommendations of the Royal Commission on Decentralization, Paras 753, 773 (IV)


Among the various forms of State Control the Legislative control was the most fundamental one. First of all the legislative supremacy over all the local bodies rested with the Government, which alone was empowered to modify or revoke their constitutions. The rights previously conferred on any local body could be withdrawn by the Government at any time and new duties and privileges could be added. These changes could be done by amending Acts. Local areas, number of members, qualifications of voters and members, removal of members and office bearers came under Government control. The detailed application of the Act had been left to be regulated by rules made by the State Government which had the same force as the Act itself because they were framed in exercise of the powers conferred upon the Government by the legislature.

Framing rules for the purpose of regulating the actual operation of the Act was one of the methods of legislative control. This applied to all local bodies. These were later compiled into Local Board Manuals and published in the State Gazette. In India, this mechanism of control was resented because here the legislature had little power to question the validity of an executive law. Excessive executive powers were constructed as bureaucratic tyranny. After 1884 these rules became numerous and rigorous in the case of Local Boards. The rule making authority of the Government was in active operation between 1884 and 1890. The local bodies could make bye-laws within the provisions of the Act with regard to certain minor matters of local

23. Amendment acts IX of 1867 and VI of 1900 could be cited as examples of this power.
administration. But even this power cannot be exercised without reference to the Provincial Government.24

Financial Control of the State Government over the local bodies was more extensively used and more widely resented. The Government had the power to revise the annual and supplementary budgets of the local bodies and this was the most effective form of the former's financial control.25 The Government could reject or modify all or any of the items in the budget. Evidences can be cited as to the Government's exercise of the controlling powers between the years 1871 and 1919. Only in 1920 this stringent provision was relaxed to some extent in the case of local bodies.26

Proposals estimated to cost over a stipulated amount had to have the prior approval of the Government. This clause was added for the first time in the Act of 1884.27 This provision regarding Government control became more important after the introduction of the elective principle in the local bodies. This provision not only continued to be in force between 1884 and 1920 but also has stayed on to the present day. Any extensive scheme of checks and controls was exercised in the case of District Boards. All Plans and estimates for any sanitary work involving a large amount had to be referred to the Sanitary engineer,

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24. Local Boards Act IV of 1884, Sections 225 and 256.
25. The Taluk and Union Board budgets were scrutinised by the President of the District Board. See: K.K. Pillay. op.cit., p.205
26. Local Boards Act V of 1920 Section: 120 and also the Act XIV of 1920 section: 117 ;
27. Local Boards Act I of 1884, Section: 90.
Sanitary commissioner, Chief engineer, the Public Works Department and ultimately to the local and municipal department of the provincial government. These led to inordinate delay and hardships.28

Exemption of particular areas from the operation of the Water and Drainage Tax needed Government's sanction. All Charitable Endowments required official permission in order to be entrusted to a local body. Loan policy of the local authorities was under strict Government control.29 The whole gamut of the capital works undertaken by local bodies depended on this question, because the resources of the local bodies were always restricted. But borrowing for capital works became necessary in times of emergency.30

State Control through audit was one of the most effective agencies and an absolutely essential one for controlling and supervising the work of the Local Boards. In its absence, the other devices of control yielded only problematic results.31 By this means the Government could satisfy itself that the Boards were keeping themselves within the limits laid down and that they were making the best and the most economical use of the powers granted to them. The Local Funds Act of 1871 required that the Local Fund accounts shall be audited by such officer and in such a manner as the Governor-in-Council shall direct.32

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30. ibid., p.256
32. Local Funds Act of 1871, Sections: 32.
The Act of 1884 reinforced this obligation. Hence, the Local Fund Code was devoted to the important question of local audit.

Local Funds accounts in each district was audited by the Treasury Deputy Collector. No payment of bills was made unless he was satisfied that the expenditure involved was covered by appropriations. In addition, the Accountant-General arranged for annual test-audit and review the monthly accounts submitted to him. All accounts had to be kept in forms prescribed for the purpose by the government. The Decentralisation commission drew attention to this enormous volume of work. In brief, the audit proved to be a mere mechanical exercise in due course. But it was a check against wasteful and extravagant spending by local bodies and often in unearthed misappropriation of funds.

Some time the Government Policy of distributing Grants in-aid was considered as a device of financial control. But these grants were given out of the Imperial Government surplus funds and their size began to increase only after 1905. The Government was satisfied at the end of the year if the Boards could show that they had spent all the amount of Grants doled out to them. Hence the Provincial Government had not much use for Grants-in-aid as a method of control.

Administrative control of the Provincial Government over the local bodies was the most comprehensive of all other controls. All the local bodies in the Madras Presidency were subjected to administrative

33. In 1915 the total number of these forms and registers came to 142, which involved lot of duplicative and unnecessary clerical work.

control through many devices. The gravity of the control was more visible during the period between 1885 and 1920 mainly due to the introduction of the elective principle into the local bodies and the consequent misapprehension of the Government that it would lead to grave risks if not properly controlled.\textsuperscript{35}

The Administrative Control of the Government over the local bodies was imposed both directly and indirectly. In fact, the Executive Government controls the life of the Local Boards. It was the authority for establishing them. It had the power to determine the areas of the jurisdiction of District Boards and Panchayats. The Government could dissolve by an order, their constitution. It could supersede a Panchayat for a specified period.\textsuperscript{36} Local Boards were responsible to two sets of authorities - the local electorate below and the Provincial Government above.

The Government had extensive powers in determining the membership of the Boards. The actual strength of the Boards according to the Act was fixed by the Government. Provision for Minority representation as well as the electoral divisions of the local area into circles or wards was in the hands of the Government. Election work and even exempting a person charged of a crime to vote in the elections, vested with the Government.\textsuperscript{37} Till 1914 the Official Presidents of the Local Boards

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Report of the Select Committee on the Local Boards Bill of 1883.}

\textsuperscript{36} W.I. Jennings, \textit{Principles of Local Government Law} 1947 Section 45-A

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{ibid.}, Section 55 (3)
controlled all of them. Government's domination over the nominated chairmen was effective. 38

The Provincial authorities had an overwhelming hold on the administrative staff of the Local Boards. It could compel every District Board to employ a District Engineer, a District Health Officer, and a District Panchayat Officer, and fix their salaries. Persons appointed to these offices should be approved by the Government, and they could be removed only with the consent of the Government.39 The Government was empowered to prescribe the qualifications to be possessed by subordinate officials of the Local Boards and make rules for their appointment and punishment.40 The Government could also take steps to 'Provincialise' the offices of the Local Boards which could easily make the servants of the Local Boards subordinates of the Provincial Government in practice.

In the matter of providing such services as education, sanitation, communication and Public Works, work of the Local Boards was subjected to close scrutiny and control of the Government. Government sanction was necessary for opening Secondary Schools for establishing the hospitals and dispensaries in cases where Government aid was sought.41 All estimates and plans for sanitary works had to be prepared by the District Medical Officer or the Sanitary Engineer. Sanction of the

39. ibid, p.137
40. Local Board’s Manual: Rule 45
41. Local Boards manual, Chapter III
department officers or the Government was required for all estimates amounting to over Rs. 10,000. The freedom of the local authorities was unduly hampered by these vexatious restrictions.42

The administrative control of the Provincial Government was exercised over the resolutions passed by the Local Boards. The Government could suspend or cancel any resolution passed, order issued or a licence granted by these bodies. Any local work at the stage of commencement or in the process of execution also could be withdrawn by the Government.43 Even in the routine work of the Local Boards, the Government could check, direct or reprimand any local body. Surprise checks and inspections could be undertaken. Very often the members of the Local Boards were in collusion with the contractors and inquiries by the Collector were ordered.44

Since 1919 a Liaison Officer was appointed to conduct inspections of the Local Boards and effect necessary co-ordination between the Government and the local bodies. An Inspector of Local Boards was appointed in 1920 and four Deputy Inspectors in 1921. The Government was also empowered to call for all records, statistics, plans and correspondence regarding any work undertaken by the local bodies.45


43. Local Boards act IV of 1884. Section: 35 and Local Boards act V of 1920. Section: 36

44. There was such a case in the Anantapur District Board. Letter of the Under Secretary to the Government of Madras to the District Board President, Anantapur dated 10th July 1988 No.575.

The Provincial authorities also received the Annual Reports and periodical returns which the local bodies regularly submitted.\footnote{Local Boards Act 1920, Section: 36}

Besides normal supervision by the Provincial Government, there were the extraordinary powers reserved against lapses in the discharge of any duty on the part of the local bodies. Provincial authorities had the right to intercede when an essential duty was not properly discharged. If the local body failed to reform itself within a grace period, a third person might be appointed to execute the work.\footnote{Local Boards Act IV 1884, Sections 37 and 35.}

But there is nothing parallel to the extraordinary powers that the Law had conferred upon in the District Collector to act in cases of emergency. Whether a particular case was an emergency or not also was to be decided by the Collector. In that even, he was authorised to take whatever action he considered necessary, without intimating to the Board or giving an opportunity to the President of the Board to explain.\footnote{Local Boards Manual, Section 41.} In matters within the jurisdiction of the Local Boards, emergencies appeared very rarely. Nevertheless, the provision was hanging like the Democleus Sword over the heads of the local bodies as an arbitrary interference. The Government possessed the ultimate power of dissolving a local body for a time or superseding it entirely. This might be warranted on account of continuous mismanagement of a local

\footnote{Local Boards Act 1920, Section: 36}\footnote{Local Boards Act IV 1884, Sections 37 and 35.}\footnote{Local Boards Manual, Section 41.}
body, mishandling of finances or failure of the Chairmen to tide over factional politics in the local bodies.

Dissolution of a local body was comparatively a milder form of punitive action than supersession. When the state of incorrigible recalcitrancy occurred, despite repeated warnings the Government resorted to the extreme step of supersession and assumed full responsibility for administrating the local body.49 District Board was superseded in the Madras presidency. Since Taluk Boards were under the control of District Boards and Union Panchayats were under the Taluk Boards the respective supervising authorities set matters right without inviting official interference. But a few District Boards took action against a few Taluk and Union Boards which were upheld by the Government.50

Some experts on the Governmental control over the local bodies attribute some judicial powers to them. According to them the end sought by the judicial control was to ensure the legality of the actions of the local bodies. Moreover, the powers enjoyed by the local bodies afforded opportunities of corruption and unfair dealings. Since the supervising authorities were for removed from the centre of their operations, the local affairs might appear to them to be trifling. It was therefore essential that the law was properly interpreted and that

49. Local Boards Act IV of 1884, Sections: 4 and Sub-section 2.
50. The Union of Tadapatri was dissolved in 1909-10. Administration Report of Anatapur District Board, 1910 G.O. No. 1095L dated 5.9.1910
unless the circumstances demanded. These powers were meant to be a safeguard against potential mismanagement by local bodies. Government control over the local bodies was a common phenomenon of Western democracies also.\textsuperscript{54}

Whereas in Euroquean democracies these controlling powers are found separately in operation in India and in the Madras Presidency they were accumulated at one centre of power. It seemed, therefore, that no stones were left unturned to keep the local bodies in total submission under the thumb of the Provincial Government. Peculiar conditions in Indian society like caste rivalry, personal animosity, corruption, jobbery and nepotism demanded Governmental control of a rigid and comprehensive type.\textsuperscript{55}

Again, the Government did not want to take the risk of leaving the entire responsibility of the local bodies in the hands of popular representatives. With a bureaucracy strongly entrenched at the Centre and Province, the local bodies could not expect to have a free hand. Inspite of this official thinking the local bodies were still given responsibilities and they learnt by experience. A benevolent type of control was sure to help the growth of Local Self-government rather than hinder its progress. Any form of control could be implemented without the pains being felt.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{54} Anderson and Others: \textit{Local Government in Europe}, London, 1939. p.38
\textsuperscript{56} M. Venkatarangaya., op.cit., p.113.
PROVINCIAL CONTROL AND LOCAL BOARDS IN ANANTAPUR DISTRICT

The Madras Local Boards Act IV of 1884 was passed repealing the Local Funds Act IV of 1871. It provided for the constitution of the Anantapur District Board at the district level and Taluk Board at the taluk level or divisional level and the Union Board for a village or group of villages. The Anantapur District Board was constituted in 1885 with 24 numbers, six of whom were officials and the rest non-officials. All the members were appointed by the Governor-in-Council of the Madras Presidency. The President of the Board also was appointed by the Government for a period of three years. In this case it was the District Collector himself.

The Governor-in-Council ordered the formation of Taluk and Union Boards also in 1885. Anantapur and Penukonda Taluks Boards had 12 members each. Gooty, Uravakonda, Tadiapatri, Rayadruag, Dharmavaram, Bukkapatanam, Penukonda, Hindupur and Madakasira Union Boards had 5 members each. The Taluk Boards sanctioned in 1885 were formed in October 1886. Three Revenue Divisions of the district were constructed into Local Fund Taluks and the 9 unions came into existence in 1886. In 1888 Pamidi and in 1889 Yadiki were formed into Unions.

58. ibid., Appendix
60. ibid., G.O.No. 254 L. dated 28.1.1899
In 1893 the reconstituted Taluk Boards were four in number each with a maximum strength of 1861. In 1896 the Taluk Boards of Anantapur and Penukonda were reconstituted owing to the formation of Kalyandurg sub-division of the Dharmavaram Taluk as a new taluk. In 1897 the maximum strength of Urvakondal Union was raised from 5 to 8. In 1899 with the reconstitution of Taluk Boards in the district, their total number was fixed at three.

In 1900 the ward system in the Union was introduced by a Government order.72 Seven hamlets in the Penukonda Taluk were detached from Bukkapatnam, Dharmavaram, Hindupur and Madakasira Union because they were situated at inconvenient distances from the Union centres.73 The strength of the Kalyandurg Union was reduced from 12 to 10.74 A few hamlets were excluded from the Gooty and Tadiapatri Unions. The Strength of Anantapur and Gooty Taluk Boards was raised from 13 to 15.75 The Maximum elective strength of the Taluk Boards was raised from 1/3 to 1/2 of the sanctioned strength. One elective seat of Anantapur Taluk Board was to be filled by a Government nominee for want of a candidate. The Maximum strength of Penukonda Taluk Board was raised from 15 to 17. In Pamidi Union the strength of members was reduced from 12 to 10.

61. ibid., G.O.No. 495L, dated 6-3-1893.
63. ibid., G.O.No. 984L dated 25.8.1902.
64. ibid., G.O.No. 16L dated 16.1.1905.
The Government constituted and reconstituted several Local Boards. Amalapuram became a Union. Timmancherla and Guntakal were constituted into a Single Union. The system of election sanctioned came into force in all the Local Boards in the district and election rules were issued by the Government. In most Unions the proportion of 2/3 elective strength was introduced. The number of Unions also went up to 17. The Government accepted the opinion of the majority of Taluk Boards in the district that the vice-President should be elected. Many Taluk Boards were permitted to elect their own Presidents.

The legislative Control of the Provincial Government over the Local Boards in the district was exercised in other ways. For example, admonishing them regarding poor attendance in Board Meetings, delay in sending of reports of administration to the Government, belated submission of development proposals and the general indifference of the members to interest themselves in local affairs.

Between 1884 and 1920 the Provincial Government had many occasions to exercise its control over financial matters of the Local Boards in the district. Budget rules regarding the District Board, Taluk Boards and Union Boards were issued in 1885. The budget of 1887 was issued.

67. ibid., G.O.No.49L dated 12.1.1916.
68. ibid., G.O.No.1810L dated 9.9.1916.
69. Proceedings of the Madras Govt. Local and M.Dept. No.1810L
drastically revised in view of the extreme poverty and fall in revenue. Even the legitimate demands of many departments could not be met.\textsuperscript{72} Revision of budget estimates occurred occasionally to suit the demands of a particular point of time. In 1902 the plague estimates caused the budget estimates to be altered accordingly.\textsuperscript{73} There was a budget revision in 1916 to enhance the allotment for education in favour of girls' schools.\textsuperscript{74}

Grants and subsides were distributed to the Anantapur District Board for various purposes from time to time. These special grants were increasingly available in the early decades of the present century. Anantapur District Board was given grants particularly for Medical buildings. Another grant from the Provincial funds of a total of Rs. 8 lakhs for road development was distributed among District Boards.\textsuperscript{75} Another grant of nearly Rs.1.25 lakhs was given to Anantapur for minor sanitary works.\textsuperscript{76} Similarly, the Local Boards of Anatapur received subsidies occasionally meant for poorer District Boards.\textsuperscript{77}

\textbf{72.} \textit{Budget Estimates of Anantapur District Board 1887}, G.O.No. 741L dated 26.4.1887.


\textbf{76.} \textit{ibid.}, G.O.No. 1350L dt. 31.7.1914.

The Provincial Government controlled the activities of the Anantapur District Board asking it to lay the audit report as required by the G.O.No. 990 LF (Fin) dated 16.8.1886 and the Local Fund Report of the district loans. The Local Fund Inspection Report pointed out the defects which were duly communicated to District Board President. The Local Fund Engineer of the Anantapur District was pulled up for failing to maintain proper records in connection with road materials. A Committee was appointed in 1920 to examine the administrative and financial relations between the Government and local bodies.

In the matter of taxation and loans the Provincial Government regulated the affairs of the Anantapur Local Boards. The Government advised the Unions to raise the house-tax and tolls to the maximum limit sanctioned. Classification of houses for the levy of house-tax in the Union also was proposed. The Chairmen of the Panchayats were allowed to fix assessment of 7 percent of capital cost by way of taxation on Government buildings in their area. There was a general complaint that the loans were not fully utilized.


81. Loans of the Government of India were alloted to local bodies under the emergency category, G.O.No. 678L dated 1.11.1912.

The Government also helped the Local Boards of Annapur District to take care of the welfare of Local Fund Employees. Provident Fund Institution for the Local Fund servants was established and its rules were confirmed. A large portion of the Fund was held in Government securities. The Government permitted the Minor Unions to contribute for the pension of its employees. The President of the District Board was directed to submit statements of the Taluk Fund reserve and balance provided in the current year's consolidated budget.

The Provincial Government exercised strict control over the revenues and expenditures of the Local Boards in Annapur district. To give an instance, in 1910 a proposal was submitted to supply drinking-water to Hindupur town through pipe lines from the Pennar river. The estimated cost of the scheme was Rs. 57,000 with an initial amount of Rs. 3000 for annual maintenance. The project had to be abandoned in view of the financial position of the Board and the prohibitive cost of the scheme.

The above mentioned evidence will prove that the State Government controlled the financial position of the Annapur Local Boards by means of strict revision of the annual budgets, disallowing schemes estimated to cost over a stipulated amount in areas like water-supply and electric lighting, granting tax exemption, loan policy, audit, subsidies

83. ibid., G.O.No. 1394 and 1395 dt. 11.8.1900
84. ibid., G.O.No. 1755M dated 29.11.1920.
85. ibid., G.O.No. 1051L dated 27.8.1886.
and grants. As Anantapur was economically a backward region, its resource were meagre. The Government had to follow a cautious policy of checks and controls.

It was in the field of the administration of the Local Boards in the district that the Provincial Government had the maximum opportunity to control them. In the early days the Government had to get the best out of these local bodies to enable the schemes work. Lack of efficient and public spirited non-official members in the various Boards was a problem. Financial constraints added to it. Therefore, the Government interference to advise, admonish and correct things was on the increase.

The Government's controlling power over the appointment of Presidents and members of the various Local Boards in the district was widely used. The District Collector was the President of the District Board. The Government proceeded cautiously in the matter of creating the Unions, confining them to populous areas first. They were not in favour of appointing officials in Unions unless no suitable non-official was available. They delegated the power of appointing the Union Presidents to the President of the District Board.87 Even in 1898 when the Local Boards Act was amended the Governor had the power to nominate a non-official President of a Local Board. In 1900 the procedure for the removal of the President and Vice-President or any member from the Local Boards was prescribed. In all this matters

Government was conscious of appointing the right persons who would toe the official line. Nomination of persons who did not enjoy the support of the various communities in the Taluk Boards area was not entertained for membership.88 The District Board and Local Boards Presidents were often requested by the Government to take measures to prevent the irregular attendance of members in Local Board meetings.89 Even incompetent and indifferent Presidents of Boards were not spared.

The Government had a good deal of indirect control over the administrative and subordinate staff of the various establishments of the Local Boards. Their appointments, promotion, salary and pension were strictly controlled. In 1885 the establishment charges of the engineering department alone showed an amount of Rs. 9876 excluding contingencies.90 A request for a famine-batta to the local fund servants from the Provincial funds could not be obliged by the Government.91 However compulsory Provident Fund facility was extended to all The District and Taluk Board servants in the district drawing a monthly salary of Rs. 10 and more.92 The Government was serious about the working of all the departments of the Local Boards to their maximum capacity. Indifferent and erring officials were reprimanded. The vaccinators, Hospital assistants, maistries and district level high

88. ibid.
89. Administration Report of Anantapur District Board 1899-1900 G.O.No. 1524 dated. 27.9.1900.
90. op.cit., year 1885, G.O. No. 573L dated 6.8.1885.
91. ibid., year 1897. G.O.No. 39LM dated 27.9.1897.
92. ibid.
officials were asked through the Administrative Reports and circulars to perform well.93

Inspection reports, annual reports on administration and committee recommendations served well in the hands of the Government to try to achieve good results from the various departments. There were strict inspection of schools, sanitation, hospital and dispensaries, markets and slaughter houses.94 Educational inspection was conducted by an inspecting school master and a Deputy Inspector of Schools.95 Wherever there was deterioration of public health in the district the Surgeon-General inspected the hospitals and dispensaries of the Local Board. The Presidents of the Taluk Boards were empowered to enter any house of dangerous epidemic for inspection during the day time and order disinfection of the premises. He could order the destruction of infected articles and the shooting down of stray dogs and pigs.96

The various committees appointed by the Local Boards helped the Government not only in their administrative control of local affairs, but also in improving conditions in their localities. There were committees for education, hospitals, sanitation, markets and other public services. Men of Civic-consciousness, public spirit and some

96. Such an inspection visit was paid by the Surgeon-General to the Munro Hospital at Ooty in 1910. District Board Administration Report 1910 G.O.1095 dated 5.9.1910.
social standing were appointed to these small vigilance groups. Though the work of these committees were not satisfactory in the early stages, their performance improved in due course.

The Government wanted the Local Boards to be watchful of corruptive practices, jobbery and nepotism in the local institutions. The Anantapur District Board President was asked by the Government to watch for direct or indirect links between Board members and corrupt contractors. In 1902 there was a Government circular to the District Board to be watchful of embezzlements and frauds of local fund money, especially house-tax collections in the Unions. Stringent punishment was recommended against such offenders and it was made mandatory that all demands, collections and balances should be submitted to the audit office.

The Provincial Government had powers to call for all records connected with the administration of the Local Boards any time. Statistics and correspondences should be submitted whenever required. In 1887 the District Board President was requested to expedite the submission of annual statements, which he had failed to forward. The review of Annual Administration Reports of the Local Boards by the Government was an incentive to the Boards to do their responsibilities

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97. Amendment to the Local Boards Act, G.O.No.1485L dt.1.7.1889.
99. ibid., G.O.No. 1171L dated 31.10.1902.
100. Memorandum of the Chief Secretary to the Anantapur Dist. Board President No. 587 Dated 20.8.1887.
carefully. After 1920 the Annual Reports had to be sent through the District Collector with his remarks.101

There are a few instances on record in support of the judicial powers of the Local Boards in the district. In 1914 the District Board of Anantapur under the approval of the Government filed a civil suit against one of its former engineers and this had involved heavy law charges on behalf of the Board.102 Cases of suspension and super session of the Local Boards were very rare during the period under review. The Union of Tadipatri was dissolved in 1909-10.103 The Union Panchyat of Uravakonda failed to meet once a month as required by section 129 of the Madras Local Boards Act. The Chairman of the Panchayat, who was responsible for this irregularity was removed from office.104 Thus the Provincial Government had a host of administrative controls over the Local Funds of Anantapur District. They ranged from interference in the daily routine of the various service departments to the extraordinary and emergency powers.

The problem of local autonomy and the need to restrict official control on the Local Boards has intrigued the minds of administrative experts and policy makers. Local bodies depend on the State Government


because fundamentally they are an integral part of the general political system in the country. The British rule in India being bureaucratic in nature, local autonomy will be inconsistent with its principles. This is a forceful factor that had retarded the progress of local bodies towards autonomy. Even the Indian Statutory Commission had to confess that there was nothing that could be recognised a Local Self-government.\textsuperscript{105}

On the other hand, local autonomy is not a thing either to be feared or discouraged. It is the source of social authority. It tends to develop a spirit of corporate life. It derives its strength directly from the people. It fosters initiative and team-spirit. If the local institutions work successfully and contribute their share to the promotion of general welfare and generate popular confidence and loyalty, there need not be any dichotomy between the civil services and local bodies.\textsuperscript{106}

In order to make local autonomy real it is necessary to transform the bureaucratic Government into a reasonable one. Local Self-government will never be considered a danger or hindrance by an elected Government. In such a circumstance the Local Self-government will fit in rather ideally into the scheme of a Provincial Government. Both may not then be contradictory but complementary wings of one and the same organism serving the people. Nevertheless, even under a democratically elected government in the Province the local bodies cannot have

\textsuperscript{106. W.I. Jennings: Local Government in the Modern Constitution, p.4.}

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autonomy in the real sense. There may be many factors at work to
create conditions for State control.107

There is a need for straining every nerve to give real autonomy to
the Local Boards. People struggeed for half of a century to get for
themselves the status of elected bodies. The value of local autonomy
to a country aspiring to be come democratic is inestimable. Bryce
foretold that "it (Local Self-government) is the best school of
democracy and the best guarantee for its success".108

There are forms of State control that may help or hinder autonomy.
Government regulations regarding the qualifications and service condi­
tions of the Local Boards employees are of a helping nature. Neither
proper account-keeping will hinder autonomy. Rules and regulation
relating to budgetary proposals and administrative reports are made
only in the best interests of the local bodies. But certain Provincial
Government rules do interfere in the free working of local boards. One
of them is the provision to consult the department officers before the
appointment of a qualified individual to a particular post.109

A broad field of activities is the first requisite for healthy
antonomy to grow. Selected representatives should have a wide scope
for service. The Local Boards should not be starved of funds. This
has been the bane of any a local body who could not survive the

stresses and strains of financial commitments. Financial constrains strangulate local autonomy. Part of the finances must flow from the local people themselves. All local services belonging to the sphere of the local bodies should be clearly defined to avoid overlapping and infringement from the State. It is rather difficult to draw a hard and fast line between services which are purely local and those that fall under the sphere of the State Government. The Government can prescribe the minimum standards expected of a Local Board and fund them adequately.

A minimum standard of education is necessary for the members of the Local Boards. Similarly, the personnel of the Provincial Government at the headquarters also should possess qualifications to ensure healthy control and supervision over the Local Boards. They must be real experts in their respective fields with the highest technical and administrative qualifications. The Civil Service cadre should possess adequate knowledge of the working of Local Self-government, who can appreciate local difficulties and solve local problems.

111. M. Venkatarangaya: op.cit., pp.119-20