CONCLUSION
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A profile of the study of Local Self-government in Anantapur District with special reference to the Local Boards from 1882 to 1920, brings to relief certain trends in the evolution of the local bodies, their achievements and failures, their merits and drawbacks, their interactions with the Government, their impact on the local people and their response to the call of the nation at a crucial stage of her heroic Struggle for Freedom.

The study confines itself to a particular region of Rayalaseema, a viable unit with a continuous historical and Local Self-government traditions. Anantapur District which constitutes the starting point of present study, had an area of 5,145 sq. miles and a population of 5,89,609 in 1882. It was notoriously famine-stricken and an easy prey to the most dangerous epidemics. The period of study from 1882 to 1920 marks the momentous years, when Local Self-government comes of age, attains the status of a movement and gets mingled with the rising tide of nationalism.

The analysis of the evolution and the vicissitudes of Local Boards in Anantapur district made in the foregoing chapters has a history of nearly half a century of an experiment in grassroot democracy and a struggle to reach its goals. The British Government originally conceived the Local Government as a device to afford relief to the

They characterised certain of the services as 'Local' and made over the responsibility of providing such services to the inhabitants of particular localities and areas. Thus arose the distinction between services to be rendered by the Central and Provincial Government and those to be rendered by the local people themselves. Ultimately, a logical connection was established between local services, local taxes and local expenditures.2

The agency performing the local services in a locality had to be different from the agency rendering the Provincial services in the same locality. This dual agency was found to be inconvenient and in order to facilitate smooth and effective administration a complete separation was brought about. The administration of the Local services presupposes intimate knowledge of local needs and interests of a locality which the official block could not have. Hence arose the need for creating an agency in the form of a board or a Panchayat consisting of some permanent residents of the area.

Another contour in the growth of the Local Boards was the effort to organise them on a democratic basis of a rudimentary character. Since the days of Lord Ripon it has been accepted that as much of democracy as practicable should be introduced in the sphere of Local Self-government. Local Boards were being formed on an elective basis. This was imperative for the successful working of popular governments at the Centre and Provinces. Nothing is more effective in stimulating

2. M. Venkatarangaiya: Beginnings of Local Taxation in the Madras Presidency, Chap. II.
the dormant public spirit of a people and divert it into useful channels of service as a sound system of Local Self-government.³

That the Local Boards should be ultimately subject to the control of the Provincial Government, is another principle that characterised their evolution. The basis of this was the policy conviction that the Local Government should not be its own master. In those days the demarcating line between what was local and what was general services, was very thin. No wonder, the Local Boards handled a number of semi-national services. A rational and proper exercise of State control and its systematisation will be a sure way of remedying the present abuses of Local Boards.

It is true that the Local Government since its inception has proceeded on healthy lines. Its evolution was in consonance with the expressed and shared convictions of the informed public, legislators and statesmen of India.⁴ They reflect the ideas of great Western political scientists. In the light of these reasons Local Boards should grow as an integral part of the democratic system of Government, entrusted with functions, financial stability and genuine importance.

The growth of Local Boards since their inception in the 1880s had been proceeding according to certain directions outlined in the preceding pages. One of the strong factors which has contributed to the success or otherwise of the Local Boards in responding to the

challenges of the time, is the geographical, political, socio-economic and literary background of the locality where they functioned. In the case of the Local Boards in the Anantapur district, they had been operating in the three-tier hierarchical pattern consisting of a District Board, Taluk Boards and Union Panchayats.

A geographical analysis of the district of Anantapur reveals that the four northern taluks of Gooty, Tadapatri, Anantapur and Dharmavarm consist of a plain broken at occasional intervals by rocky hills. The Penukonda taluk, is a very large one, formed by connecting a line of low hills of trap rock. In the three southern taluks of Penukonda, Hindupur and Madakasira the scenery becomes more interesting, and the country rises to the Mysore plateau. The southern tract bordering on Cuddapah is a deep jungle. Of the total area about one-sixth is uncultivable.5

Historically this land had witnessed the rise and fall of kingdoms for many a century in the pre-British days. When the East India Company established its power here in the early 19th century there was one more change of masters, who had brought in their own systems of law and administration. The social structure of this area was a mosaic of castes and sub-castes, of pluralistic religious affiliations and multi-lingual in character. Given the arid nature of the soil, poor rainfall, frequent famines and regular visitations of fatal epidemics, the district was economically lagging behind. In 1883-84, its total


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revenue was Rs.1,05,48 the lowest of all the 21 districts of the Madras Presidency. In 1901 the percentage of literates among males was 7.3 while it was only 0.4 per cent among females, constituting a total of 3.9 per cent. The rural population was submerged in poverty, ignorance and disease.

It was in this backdrop of all-round backwardness that the experiment of the Local Boards was tried. The success of an institution having the traits of a Western transplant in it, depends largely on the potentials of the place where it is experimented and the people whose participation it expects. Economic viability of a reasonable measure, political awareness and public spirit, social and communal harmony and above all an educational base, at least of a minimum standard, are some of the fundamental requisites needed for success. In the absence of these vital ingredients for success, the experiment is likely to be wrought with dangers like lack of response, submission to paternalistic control, absence of initiate, gross indifference to matters public and ultimately factionalism, corruption and negativism.

The present study raised a set of questions regarding the functioning and nature of the Local Boards in the Anantapur District as the object of its inquiry. An examination of the evidences for the period under review, viz., 1982-1920, in respect of the performance of the Local Boards might provide the answers. But the constrains at work which hampered the progress of the experiment should not be overlooked. For an objective evaluation of the triumphs and tragedies of the Local Self-government in the Anantapur District, those factors should be constantly kept in mind.
Coming to the extent and nature of the local response to the call of the Local Boards in Anantapur, the observation of the Secretary to the Government of Madras Presidency made in the annual report of the District Board administration of 1920 is worth mentioning here:

'The Government record with pleasure their appreciation of the good work done by the non-official Presidents of Taluk Boards; the report reveals a progressive and enlightened policy, but the financial position of the Boards is unsound and requires careful overhauling.6

Experts on Local Self-government affairs point out that two approaches have significantly influenced the local institutions, viz., the 'democratic' and the 'efficiency' approach. The democratic approach views Local Government as an institution endowed with sufficient powers and resources and run by the community in accordance with its wishes. The quest for 'efficiency', on the other hand, views Local Government as but an administrative mechanism set up by the State Government to do allotted tasks with due efficiency.7 While there is no inherent contradiction between administrative efficiency and democratisation, in practice there has been a definite primacy of 'efficiency' over 'democracy'. This may be put in another way. Whether the criteria of a Local Self-government is success in the

efficiency of administration or the political education of the people as wished by liberal statesmen like Lord Ripon.

We see in the working of the Local Boards in the Madras Presidency in general, and in Anantapur district in particular, the 'deliberative' and 'executive' functions. The Local Boards were deliberative Bodies first and foremost where policy decisions are made and directions for the execution of such policies are given. The members of such bodies, whether official or non-official have an obligation to participate in the deliberations and contribute to their effective functioning.

It is evident from the records that attendance at the meetings of the various Boards by the members particularly, the non-official sector, was deplorably poor. Sometimes, meetings had to be postponed for want of a quorum. Members had to be warned, admonished, persuaded and, in case of obstinacy, even removed from office. Vacancies could not be filled on time because the suitable persons were not available. After the introduction of the elective element the position of attendance seems to have improved. Minor problems relating to communal representation in the boards were reported. There was a case of objection from the Brahmin community of Madakasira in connection with the nomination of a Muslim. There seems to be a good percentage of Muslims in the Boards but representation for Christians and Depressed classes was wanting. Women were totally unrepresented throughout the period under review.

The Administration Reports of the Government state that generally the members of the Rural Boards took an active interest in the affairs
of their boards. The elected Chairmen played their parts creditably. Members came forward to be represented in the various committees of the Boards like Education, Hospital, Sanitation and Famine - relief Committees. When, later on, District Educational Councils were organised, there was much desirable participation.

It is true that the data, given in the Reports, having been collected by the Government agents, had a tendency of bias and full of platitudes and exaggerated generalizations. However, the reports of Enquiry Commission are by far objective. According to these Reports generally the experiment of Rural Boards was not much of a success. They commented that the real significance of a proper system of Local Self-government was not fully understood or appreciated even by the progressive sections of popular opinion.

The poor rate of performance in the matter of the deliberative functions of the Local Boards in Anantapur was due to some important factors. The system as it was tried here had an overtone of English trappings which was little familiar even to the educated local people. The village as a basic unit of the whole edifice of Local Self-government, was not given due importance. The Unions appeared to be artificial creations, which were prone to create rivalries, particularly when a Union consisted of groups of villages.

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The elective element was introduced into the Local Bodies after lot of vacillation and hesitancy. Consequently such a significant element of democracy at the grass-roots was consistently unsteady and slow in its growth. The Union Boards were not allowed to elect even a section of their members until 1913. Till then, for a major part of the period under survey, Government officials and nominated members dominated these Local Boards.

Franchise qualifications for the Rural Boards were stringent. Only well-to-do classes took an active interest in the elections, and they represented the vested interests or personal vanity. Another major handicap which prevented the rural people from taking part in the Local Government was the ignorance of the English language. The language obstacle was a formidable one.10

Regarding the local initiative, independence of action and efficiency in performance as displayed by the Local Boards in Anantapur district, the same obstacles described above were partly responsible for the moderate success. The Local people had intimate knowledge of the locality and its needs. Yet, the response was much limited to a few enterprising leaders and members who could command some respect in the Boards, like Mr. P. Kesava Pillai at Gooty and Mr. Adimurthi in Anantapur.

Independence of action was out of question in the face of the dominance of the Official groups and the ex-officio Government

officials. If one ventured to be too independent and articulate he feared that he might not be returned again to the Board. Most members tried to protect their personal interests and that of the community from which they hailed. Efficiency in performance too was not altogether absent. Members rendered good assistance in the Boards by check-measuring works in the Unions, in reporting about House-tax appeals and preventing encroachments. They played an impressive role in the Committees and got the appreciation of the officials.11

The contribution of the Local Boards in Anantapur to public life and welfare cannot be underestimated. In the major areas of their functions such as public health, education, sanitation, construction of roads, water-supply etc. the Local Boards have turned out commendable performance. Substantial benefits accrued to the people. The progress was slow but year after year the performance was better. With the provision of additional Grants by the Government, the amount expended by the Local Boards on the various services of the district increased.

The length of the roads maintained by the District Board in 1885 was just 253 miles. In 1890 it had gone up to 685 and the next decade to 883 and by 1920 the total was 1,137 miles. The roads were in much better condition than in the neighboring districts. Most roads were metalled. The construction of the Nagasamudram - Ramagiri road


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completed in 1914 was an outstanding example of rural development. The temporary set back in road maintenance was corrected by 1918-19 by a through overhauling of the engineering staff.

Public Health in Anantapur had been constantly unsatisfactory due to the prevalence of epidemics like plague and cholera. But the medical services provided were not adequate. In 1890-91, the district had 4 hospitals and 4 dispensaries. In 1910-11 they were 4 and 7 respectively. But in 1920-21 there were two hospitals and 10 dispensaries. Vaccinators and midwives could not be procured easily. In 1920 there were only 8 midwives in the service of the Board. Some medical institutions were closed down owing to shortage of medical officers. The number of patients amounted to 11 per cent of the population.

In the field of education the Anantapur Local Boards faired well in Elementary Education. The Elementary Schools which numbered just one in 1890 rose upto 351 in 1920. There was one Secondary school in 1890 and it rose to 5 in 1920. Training Schools were few and far between. The Local Boards opened special Schools for Panchamas and other backward classes which accounted for 30 in 1920 with 780 students. Night schools for the labouring classes were run. Admission of the Panchamas in regular Schools and higher caste pupils seeking admission in Panchama schools became common. The average strength of

Taluk Boards Schools in 1920 was 12,814. The Girls' schools which were almost nil in the beginning rose upto 52 with a strength of 2023 in 1920.\textsuperscript{13}

Sanitation was another area in which the Local Boards have done very satisfactory work. In the early stages the scavenging system was very poorly organised. The private scavenging system on the 'ward' basis did not receive public response. By the turn of the century things improved fast. Water-supply was another service in which the Boards were much interested. Protected water-schemes for Hindupur, Dharmavaram and Penukonda had seen the light of day by 1920. Village improvement schemes like removing strubs and reducing congestion through slum clearance projects have worked well.

Representation in the Local Bodies were severely restricted to certain segments of the society, who were educated, well-to-do members of the dominant communities and men who were able to command local social influence. In the District Board of the year 1912, among the 15 non-official members there was only one Christian (La pastro), 6 Muslims and the rest caste Hindus. The Backward and Depressed classes had no representation. Among the weaker sections of the society representation for women was conspicuous by its absence. The cultivators, labourers and small traders were unrepresented. Only in 1920, the Government passed orders to increase the representation for Minorities and Depressed classes in the Local Boards.\textsuperscript{14}


\textsuperscript{14} Proceedings of the Madras Government, Local and Municipal Department, G.O. No. 580 L dated 15.6.1920.
The Local Boards in Anantapur District as they functioned in the locality were not free from pitfalls and drawbacks. In the actual working of the Boards these defects began to surface. The Boards suffered from structural, administrative, financial and certain inherent problems from the outset. The area of operation of the Local Boards was unwieldy and large for effective functioning. The boundaries of the units were often shifted in the process of constituting and reconstituting the Boards from time to time. Some Unions appealed to the Government to detach them from the original structures because they complained of inconvenient distance from the headquarters. Moreover, already a Municipal Council was functioning at Anantapur since 1889 and the operational services of these two bodies were not much different.

The system of Local Government as devised then suffered from a built in contradiction in the form of division of functions between the deliberative and the executive organs, the latter being headed not by an elected representative, but by a government official appointed by the State. The Presidentship of many local bodies was for an unduly long time entrusted to Government officials. The District Board had no elected President till 1919. The Taluk Boards were not empowered to elect their Presidents until 1909 and Union Boards until 1920. When the Chief executive of the Local Boards was either a Government official or a nominated non-official, responsibility on the part of the popular representatives was slow to appear.

The Provincial authorities exercised enormous powers over the Local Boards. Not only legislative and judicial, but also administrative and financial controls were there. All policies should be adopted
only with Government approval. A host of rules and regulations stifled the Boards. Elaborate procedures, statistics and tabular forms took away much of the time of the members. The members of the civil service and other departments were subservient to the ex-officio Presidents and did not help the spontaneous growth of the Local Self-government. Added to all these, were the nominated non-official members who sided with the officials for their own gains.

The financial resources of the Local Boards in the district were never in a stable position. Due to times of drought, scarcity and constant occurrence of epidemics the taxes could not be collected in full. The local resources were inadequate to meet the heavy expenses, of the various public welfare services. But for the generous Grants from the Central and Provincial Governments, and the occasional special Grants to the poorer district Boards the Local Boards would not have achieved, what little they had done in the four decades. The capacity of the people to pay the taxes was limited. Hence it was difficult for the Boards to think of levying new taxes and cesses in order to improve their resources. The villages of the Unions found the house-tax a burden and at one point opposed its imposition. There were conflicts in the sharing of taxes among the groups of villages which constituted the unions.

Judged by their performance in the course of nearly half a century, the Local Boards of Anantapur district cannot be dismissed as a dismal failure. It is true that the people or their representatives did not have a real share in the Local Government. Perhaps their views
also did not reflect the popular views. However, it should not be forgotten that the Local Boards were functioning in an extremely difficulty situation of low literacy, abject rural poverty, absence of public spirit and civic consciousness and sectarian conflicts. The Boards indeed created a process of conscientization among the people about the importance of local participation and responsibility. The contributions of the Boards to political education cannot be ignored.

This in turn paved the way for the emergence of local leadership in the urban and rural context. Public spirited men were not lacking. A new group of 'urban elite and urban rich' provided a potential base of recruitment to nurture the infant democratic venture. In the records of the Government relating to Local Bodies, only names recommended for nomination are mentioned. Not much information is available about their qualifications and background. It could be assumed easily that they belonged to the leading caste-groups of Brahmins, Reddies, Kammamas and Vaisiyas and a few Muslim and Christian gentlemen. They represented presumably the trading, business and landlord category, and the profession of lawyers mainly.

Leadership at the Local Boards levels was not burdened with the task of policy-making, except in the restricted spheres such as taxation. The decisions that the Presidents and Vice-Presidents were called upon to make, were essentially of an administrative character. In short, this activity demanded only decisions as regards priorities. Statutory provisions and long-established conventions enabled them to perform their allotted functions without any confrontation.
Of the men who have served the Local Boards in the Anantapur District with credit, Dewan Bahadur Gooty P. Kesava Pillai's name is still fresh in the minds of the people of this locality. Born in Tamil Nadu, he had made Gooty his second home and dedicated his whole life for the service of the land of his adoption. Whereas great stalwarts like Pandit Nehru, Netaji, Tandon, Rajaji, Kamaraj and a host of top-ranking leaders entered the National political arena from the Local Bodies, P. Kesava Pillai descended into Local politics from the National arena. In 1885 he represented Rayalaseema in the First session of the Indian National Congress. Already in 1894-95 he was a member of the Gooty Taluk Board. Along with Rev. W.W. Stephenson, member of the Anantapur District Board, he visited the Unions in his taluk on official supervision work.15

A man of exemplary integrity he would not tolerate any indiscipline in public affairs. As Chairman of the Hospital Committee in the Gooty Taluk Board he opposed the reappointment of a Medical subordinate to the Board on grounds of the latter’s objectionable behaviour. In 1919 he was made the non-official Vice-President of the Anantapur District Board. In view of his selfless services in the cause of local Self-government and his contributions to public welfare in the district, he became in 1926 the first non-official nominated President and also the first elected President of the Anantapur District Board.


See also: Sri Sadhana Pakriba (Telugu Weekly), dated 26.1.1929.
Mr. P. Adimurty is another luminary in the field of Local Self-government in Anantapur. He became the non-official President of the Anantapur Taluk Board after serving there as a member for many terms. He also served in the District Educational Committee for a number of years. In 1885, the Anantapur District Circle Board had a few prominent leaders as non-official members. N.C. Gopalacharier, A.G. Sadasiva Reddy, Pulamati Subba Row and Ustipalli Pulliah Chetty represented the Anantapur Taluk, C. Chechiah, I. Subba Reddy, Setty Adepa, Saiyid Fakhruddin and Allabax Abdul Qadir represented Tadapatri Taluk, S. Hanumantha Row came from Gooty Taluk, K. Guroycharrl, P. Byeppa reddi, M. Nageswara Row, Saiyd Rahamia, D. Bhagavanta Row and G. Narasinga represented Penukonda Taluk, Kottah Kondaiah, Makum Seeniah represented Hindupur Taluk, while D. Parameswarraapa and Zilla Dasana came from Dharmavaram Taluk.16

In the Anantapur District Board Y. Sanjiva Rao, P. Adimurti Rao, M. Hampayya and Zilla Seshayya represented the non-official group. Rev. W.W. Stephenson, G. Venkata Subba Aiyer, Patel Narayana Reddy and Khan Sahib K. Imamudin were important members of the non-official block. Apart from leaders of the Local Government, the district brought out philanthropists like Sri Karsavawappa Swami of Gavi. Math, Uravakonda and Rai Sahib M. Hampayya, member of the Gooty Taluk Board and of the District Board of Anantapur who endowed a hospital at Guntakal. It will not be out of place to remember a few British Collectors of the District who were also the Presidents of the District

Board. A. Cruickshank, B. Macleod, F.A. Nicholson, MacIver and G.F. Paddision played a useful role in directing the Local Boards.

The role of the Local Self-government in the Freedom Struggle is well-known. When the Local Boards were formed all over the country following the Act IV of 1884, the Congress organization was born. The official domination in the Local Bodies was one of the planks of agitation carried on by the Congress Moderates who demanded more decentralization and democratization for the local institutions. Local Bodies became the training grounds for our future leaders. The elections to the Local Boards were not on political party basis during the period of this study. They were less noisy, less costly and led to more constructive work for the people. Many celebrated leaders of the National movement did not feel shy to participate in Local Self-government as was demonstrated by the shining example of men like P. Kesava Pillai.

Local Self-Government in Anantapur district with reference to the Local Boards was blossoming into maturity and stability by the close of 1920.17 The erstwhile Taluk Boards of the District were being raised to the status of Municipalities. The experience gained in working the Local Boards in the Anantapur District between 1882 and 1920 was not a wasteful experiment. It was a new system alien and imposed from top and hence took a long time to strike roots in the native soil. Perhaps it was not given full scope for free development. History

should not judge the Local Boards by what they failed to do, but rather by what they planned to do, but could not do owing to a strange combination of circumstances. The battle for a vigorous system of Local self-government is certainly not without hope. The battle cry of 'Panchayat Raj' is once again resounding the length and breath of the country. A progressive widening of the Local Self-government is the right policy for all democracies to pursue.