CHAPTER - III

Local Self-government at the District Level.
The Anantapur Experience
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LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL
THE ANANTAPUR EXPERIENCE

A history of Local Self-Government in the Anantapur District may best be preceded by a brief account of the growth of Local Self-Government in the wider context of the Madras Presidency during the period under study. This seems to be necessary because Anantapur District itself formed a part of the Ceded Districts which had been merged in the newly created Presidency of Madras in the early part of the last century.1 When Local Self-government was being experimented by the British administrators in India, the Presidencies of Madras and Bombay led the way in respect of public spirit and voluntary service as a response to the official efforts.2

The Madras Presidency, the southern-most Province of British India, extended over a large part of Peninsular India. It comprised of an area of 126, 166 square miles. A considerable part of the region is endowed with fertile soil, and agriculture has been all along the major occupation. Rainfall being meagre most of the rivers dry up during the summer.3 Except in the deltaic regions, the yield from the land is poor

1. Bk. Sivasankaranayana (Ed) : Anantapur District Gazetteer, Hyderabad, 1970 p. 4

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poverty and occasional famines as well as frequent epidemics have plagued the land.

The large size of the Province and the growing population had an impact on the Government, both Central and Local. For the sake of revenue administration the Presidency was divided into districts. In 1850 the Province consisted of 19 districts and in 1919 the total number of districts went up to 25. Each district in its turn came to be divided into two to six divisions, most divisions into taluks and each taluk into a number of villages.

In an area so vast and varied in terms of climate, fertility and occupied by people of diverse cultural backgrounds, consisting of Tamils, Telugus, Kanarese, Malayalis and Oriyas, it is natural to find these villages to be of several types. These villages enjoyed self-sufficient style of rural life for ages. A city corporation and mofussil Municipalities had been established in the Presidency in the early days of British rule.

The history of the statuary Panchayat system in Madras can, in fact, be traced to the early 19th century enactments which recognised and continued the institutions of the Karnam (village headman).

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6. *Regulation XXIX of 1802 and Regulation IV of 1816*. Urban Government has also a long history in the Madras Presidency.
Another regulation in 1816 declared him to be the village munsif. With power to decide suits within a limit of Rs.10. He could assemble the Village Panchayats to decide cases of higher value and try petty criminal cases and award punishments. The Panchayats in due course fell into disuse. But it is common knowledge that attempts were made to revive them in the 1880s.

A Municipal Corporation, modelled after familiar institutions then in vogue in Britain and clothed with the authority to levy specified taxes was set up in 1687. In 1726 the Municipal Corporation was replaced by a Mayor's Court which was more of a judicial body than an administrative one. However, the introduction and extension of Local Self-government in any Province depended entirely on the central government.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Act XXVI of 1850 provided for the establishment of a Municipal agency in any town on the application of the residents. The Royal Army Sanitary Commission of 1863 urged the extension of municipal administration. Acts were passed in Bengal, Madras and the Punjab to give effect to the Act. The municipalities were given no substantial powers nor was there any systematic policy regarding their organization.

7. C.S. Srinivasachari: History of the City of Madras, Madras, 1939, p. 20
Lord Mayo's famous Resolution of 1871 stressed the need for promoting Municipal institutions. The Governor-General's main object was to relieve the Central Government of the financial strains by local taxation. New Municipal Acts were passed subsequently to carry out this policy of financial decentralisation. Rural Boards were established in the Madras Presidency in due course.10

DISTRICT MUNICIPALITIES OF TOWNS IN THE MADRAS PRESIDENCY

The earliest attempts to establish municipal organisation in the Province outside Madras city began in 1850. Citizens of such towns as were eager to improve their sanitation, roads and other facilities and who were prepared to bear the necessary taxes, were permitted to create a Corporation in their towns.11 The members of this Body were to be the prominent citizens of the town appointed by the Governor-in-Council and the Magistrate would be its President. This Act being permissive in character, the response was not encouraging. The Act was put into operation in a few towns in the Presidency. Till 1805 most of the Municipal Bodies in the towns were organised on a voluntary basis.12


12. Towns such as Berhampur, Adoni, Kurnool, Bellary and Coimbatore had such organisation. See: The Madras Administration Report 1855-56 p.25.
The Towns Improvement Act of 1865 gave a statutory basis to the Municipal Bodies. This type of Municipal organisation was introduced into 29 towns by 1866 and in the next year 18 more were added. But the total number of Mofussil Municipalities were as low as 47 in 1882. District Municipalities Act of 1884 which followed Lord Ripon's Resolution of 1882 provided for a large representation of the town inhabitants in the District Municipalities by means of election. Strangely enough, the Madras Government was skeptical of the principle of election as a potential for mismanagement.

At the dawn of the present century (1904) the Madras Presidency had 60 Municipalities with the gradual increase of elected members. The Royal Commission on Decentralisation in 1906 suggested a substantial increase of the elective majority. The educated citizens of the Presidency thought that the Government of India's Resolution of 1915 was not progressive enough in its recommendations. There were strong protests in the Madras Legislation Council. The Madras Government was aware of the public feelings and appointed a special officer to draft a revised District Municipalities Bill to get to know the views of the Municipal Councils regarding their desired amendments.

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In the meantime the Government of India's Resolution came in 1918. The District Municipalities Act of 1920 passed by the Madras Legislature introduced significant changes in the Local Self-government. Enhanced franchise and increased participation in Municipal administration by the average citizen were the main features of the new legislation. The scheme of District Municipality having become stable was expanded over the Presidency.16

RURAL BOARDS IN MADRAS PRESIDENCY

The term 'Local Boards' is used in the Madras Presidency to denote the authorities exercising jurisdiction in matters of local government outside the Municipalities. They are institutions concerned with the affairs of rural parts as distinguished from urban centres. The may be rightly called 'Rural Boards'. Their power and responsibility extended over an area of 122,800 square miles with a population of about thirty eight million souls.17 The duties covered almost all the elements of the community welfare and the sphere of their operation was designated as the 'area'.

The Local Fund Board, the precursor of the modern District Board, was the first rural body to be organised in the Madras Presidency. The origin of the Rural Board is related to the voluntary efforts taken by the Collector Arcot in 1853 to construct a road in the district.18

This laudable example was soon followed by other districts. Thus the idea of a 'local fund' for promoting the welfare of the district became common. In 1863 the levy of an Education Cess was sanctioned.19

The Local Fund Board came into existence as the result of the Act 1871. They were meant for the management of rural areas with various functions and fixed sources of income. 'Circles' in each district would be under a Local Board and serve as the administrative unit in the rural tracts. The Presidency of Madras was accordingly divided into thirty six 'Circles'. Some districts were divided into more than one 'Circle' in proportion to their populations.20

Ripon's reforms in the field of Local Self-Government introduced far-reaching changes. Smaller administrative units were preferred to secure local knowledge, and create interest more effectively.21 On the recommendations of the Local Self-Government Committee appointed by the Madras Government, the Local Boards Act of 1884 was passed. Subsequently a three-tier system of rural institutions was accepted with the District Boards coterminus with the revenue districts, the Taluk Boards, each comprising of one or more Revenue Taluks and the Union Panchayats, each consisting of one or more villages.22

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21. ibid., p. 5
The Resolution of 1915 favoured the formation of Village Panchayats in selected areas preferably a single panchayat for different duties. The Madras Government asked the district authorities to create Village Panchayats in selected villages with a population of three thousand and less. But this experiment was not expected to touch even five percent of the rural population.23

The Village Panchayats Act of 1920 enabled the inhabitants of any village who had sufficient public spirit to have a Panchayat constituted in their village and exercise statutory powers in all matters relating to sanitation, protection, medical relief, and education. The element of compulsion to form Panchayats was still to come in the Presidency. There was wide scope within the parameters of the Act of 1920 for the restoration the ancient village life. By the end of 1924-25 the Madras Presidency had 579 Panchayats and their number increased in the subsequent years.24

By the year 1919 the Madras Presidency had a large Corporation with a high proportion of elected members, an elected President and a strong independent executive authority. The District Municipalities of the Presidency had attained a considerably stable position in the scheme of Local Self-government. Over the years they became elected bodies, with elected chairmen. However the development of Rural Boards

was slower than that of District Municipalities and the Madras Corporation. Election was introduced slowly. Franchise was narrow and the qualifications for a candidate were rather high. Many changes had to come before Local Self-government became a reality.\textsuperscript{25}

\textbf{THE ANANTAPUR EXPERIENCE}

The Anantapur District in the old Ceded Districts area was a part of the Madras Presidency during the period of our study. In the Vijayanagara period in the whole District of Anantapur came under their rule.\textsuperscript{26} Later on a good portion of the District was ruled by Palegars who were vassals of the Kings of Golconda and Cuddapah, Nawabs and the Marathas. Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan took over subsequently.\textsuperscript{27}

In 1800 at the conclusion of the Third Mysore war, the most Southerly portion of the Nizam's territories lying below the Tungabhadra river was assumed by the British towards payment for the English force. Thus a large tract of the country was added to the possessions of the East India company in the South, which carried power from the coast to the centre of the peninsula.\textsuperscript{28}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{25} K.K. Pillai: Op. cit. p. 82.
\item \textsuperscript{26} In various parts of the District, Pre-Historic relics have been found. Among the ancient dynasties could be included the Mauryas, Satavahanas, Chalukyas of Badami, Banas, Rastrakutas, Nolamba Pallavas, Kalyana Chalukyas of Yadavas, Hoysales, Nidugal Cholas and Vaidunthas. See Bh. Sivasankaranarayana (Ed): The Anantapur District Gazetteer, pp. 45-56.
\item \textsuperscript{27} W. Francis: Anantapur District Gazetteer, Madras 1905, p. 32.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Manual of Administration of the Madras Presidency, Vol I, 1885, p. 52-53.
\end{itemize}
Anantapur, situated to the south-east of Bellary was once the western limit of the real Canarese country. When the Ceded Districts were handed over to the Company, the Government of Madras appointed Sir Thomos Munro as the Principal Collector of this area. In 1882, Anantapur was separated from Bellary and formed into a separate District. The modern history of Anantapur District begins in the early part of the 19th century. Since then, its status and frontiers have been changing often according to the policies of the government of Madras.29

Anantapur district lies to the western most in the States between 130, 41' and 150, 14'N and 76° 47' and 78° and Kurnool, on the east by Cuddapah and Chittoor and on the south and west by the former Mysore state. It forms a part of the northern extremity of the Mysore plateau and slopes from the south to the north. Anantapur, Gooty, Tadapatri, Dharmavaram, Penukonda, Hindupur and Madakasira are the main taluks.30

Sir Thomas Munro, the Principal Collector from 1800 - 1807 had his headquarters at Anantapur. In 1807 the area was divided into three separate Divisions or Collatorates and Bellary, Cuddapah and Kodikonda were fixed as the headquarters of these three Collectorates. In 1808, the Kodikonda Division was abolished. In 1821, the Tadimarri Taluk was abolished and its villages were distributed between Tadapatri and Anantapur. Anantapur continued to be the headquarters of the Bellary district. But the capital was moved now and then between Bellary and

29. ibid., p. 54
30. ibid., p. 52
Anantapur.\textsuperscript{31} Upto 1881 the Anantapur district formed a portion of Bellary and its history is a part of the history of Bellary. Since 1882, when the separate District of Anantapur was formed, it assumed greater importance.

A study of the growth of Local Self-government in Anantapur District will not be complete without a review of the socio-economic background of the District. The population of the District according to the Census of 1881, was 59,9889. The District often suffered the ravages of famines and epidemics.\textsuperscript{32} The major occupation of the people is agriculture. The main crops are paddy, jawar, bajra, ragi, maize, korra, horse-gram, chillies, vegetables, sugarcane, cotton, ginger, ground-nut, castor, tobacco and turmeric. Dairy farming, sheep breeding poultry-farming and orchids are other agricultural activities.\textsuperscript{33}

Among the leading industries of the District weaving, mining, ground-nut decorticating, oil-pressing sericulture, beedy-making, weaving, pottery mat-making and lime-making occupy a place of importance. The pattern of trade and commerce in the District is mainly agro-based. Mandis constitute the whole sale markets. The road mileages are better in the District than (the Stalc and the Telengana) other Districts of the state excluding Hyderabad.\textsuperscript{34}

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\item \textsuperscript{31} Report of the Administration of Madras Presidency 1875-76
\item \textsuperscript{32} Manual of Administration of the Madras presidency 1885, p. 53.
\item \textsuperscript{33} W. Francis : Op. cit. p.26
\item \textsuperscript{34} Bh. Sivasankaranarana, Op. cit. p. 445
\end{itemize}
The district communities of Brahmins, Virasaras (Lingayats), Visyas, Balijas, Kurubas, Gollas, Kammas, Boyas, Sales, Kammasales, Malas Madigas, Muslims, Christians, as well as Scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes as major communities.35 Migrations to neighbouring states during drought seasons and scarcity is common. Like its history, the district has a long and lively tradition of education with Colleges and numerous schools both for boys and girls and a university one decade old. Telugu, Kanada, Urdu, Lambadi, Tamil, Marathi, Yerukala, Hindi and Malayalam are spoken here.36

In view of its climate Anantapur is regarded as one of the healthiest districts in the state. But epidemics like cholera, smallpox, plague, malaria, leprosy and tuberculosis visit this area often. The District Headquarters Hospital at Anantapur, other hospitals at the Taluk headquarters and several private hospitals attend to the sick and the afflicted. Management of public health and sanitation has a long history in the District. A few Voluntary service organisations render commendable service to public welfare.37

DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN THE DISTRICT

Local Self-government in Anantapur District has an impressive history spanning over many centuries. We have seen how in the pre-Vijayanara days local villages assemblies, called Urs, transacted all

35. ibid., Chapter V
37. ibid : pp. 791-800
public business on behalf of the people inhabiting the villages.38 The Sabhas not only collected taxes but redressed public grievances and exercised judicial functions.39 As seen above, the local bodies under the rule of the various dynasties in the region were concerned with municipal functions such as the acquisition and disposal of lands, grant of lands, collection of taxes payable to the Imperial Government, levying of taxes for local purposes, remission of taxes, administration of justice, the control of temples and endowments and the conformant of honours on deserving persons.40

As elsewhere in the Madras Presidency, the District of Anantapur also came under the impact of the British system of Local Self-government.41 Since the early 19th century, law and order was established in the turbulent Ceded Districts and new systems of administration were introduced. Sir Thomas Munro was a benevolent administrator, who endeared himself in a variety of ways to the people of the District who continue to cherish loving memories of him.41 Munro's Ryotwari system enabled the peasantry and the village community to directly enjoy the protection of the State and be guided in the regulation of local affairs.42

41. I. Bradshaw : Sir Thomas Munro (Rules of India Services) 1893.
An effective step was taken in the direction of introducing Local Self-government in the region under study in 1850. When Act XXVI was passed, provision was made for the introduction of District Municipalities in such towns where the inhabitants were desirous of making better provisions for improved sanitation in the town. A number of purely voluntary associations sprang up for sanitation and other municipal purposes. Such an association was formed in the District of Bellary of which Anantapur was a part.43

A fund was raised to be spent on district roads by the District Collector and the District Engineer under the supervision of the Board of Revenue. Rents of ferries, carts and grasses, the proceeds of the Cattle Pound and avenue tree-clippings were added to the fund. Tolls and fishery rents also were credited to it. But the education Cess of 1863 meant for the maintenance of schools in the District did not produce the expected results.44

The Town Improvement Act X of 1865 and the Local Funds Act IV of 1871 set up Municipalities and Local Fund Boards respectively. The whole Presidency was divided into a number of Circles and constituted a Local Funds Board for each of them. The District of Bellary, of which Anantapur was then a part, was divided into three Circles. Tadapatri, Gooty, Anantapur, Alur and Adoni Taluks, constituted the first Circle, Hindupur, Renukonda and Madakasira formed the second, and Rayadrug, Bellary and Hospet constituted the third. Kadiri was then a part of

the Madanapalle Circle in Cuddapah District. With the formation of
the Anantapur District in 1882 the three Local Fund Circles were
converted into two, one co-terminus with Bellary and the other with
Anantapur.45

The Local Boards Act V of 1884 was passed repealing the Act IV of
1871. It provided for the constitution of a District Board at the
district level, a Taluk board at the taluk or Divisional level and a
Union Board for a village or a group of villages. This hierarchical
system came to stay.46 The Anantapur District Board was formed in
1885. Taluk Boards were formed in Anantapur District before 1886.
Nine Union Boards were ordered to be formed in the Anantapur
District in 1886.47 The Union Boards thus formed were those of Gooty,
Uravakonda, Tadapatri, Kalyanadrug, Dharmavaram, Penukonda, Hindupur
and Madakasira.*Pamidi was constituted into a Union in 1887 and Yadiki
in 1889.48

Between 1890 and 1920 several changes took place in the
constitution and functions of the Local Boards in the Anantapur
District. Taluk Boards were regrouped and their number was raised to
four in place of three. They were located at Gooty, Anantapur,
Dharmavarm and Renukonda.49 In 1911 Kairi Taluk was added to the

45. ibid p. 588.
46. M. Venkataramaiya: The Development of local Boards in the Madras
47. Manual of Administration of the Madras Presidency 1885, p. 54.
48. ibid., Vol I, 1893 p. 6
49. Proceedings of the Madras Government Local and Municipal
Department, G.O. No. 580 L. Dated 13-3-1899.
Anantapur District. In 1914 Amarapuram was constituted into a Union.\textsuperscript{50} In 1916 Guntakal and Timmancherla were merged into a single Union. In 1918 Konakondla, Singanamala and Vellanur were also constituted into Unions followed by Beluguppa in 1919. Thus there were 18 Unions in the District in 1919.\textsuperscript{51}

The Local Boards Act XIV of 1900 gave independent status to different classes of Local Boards. The Local Boards became autonomous and the government interference was confined only to cases of emergency or maladministration. An Inspector of Local Boards and Municipal Councils was appointed to supervise their work.\textsuperscript{52} The Local Boards Act of 1920 was brought into force in 1921. In Anantapur District it became operative in 1922. There were four Taluk Boards.\textsuperscript{53}

In this Chapter a review of the history of Local Self-government between 1850 and 1920 has been made. In the backdrop of this evolution was the Presidency of Madras with the local governments. Anantapur had a municipality as early as 1869. In 1871 it was constituted into a Local Fund Circle along with Bellary. By 1882 it became an independent District and Circle. In 1884 Anantapur had a District Board, three-and later four-Taluk Boards, and nine Union Boards.\textsuperscript{54} The changes in the

\textsuperscript{50} ibid., G.O. No. 120 dated 19-1-1914.

\textsuperscript{51} Administration Report of Local Boards - 1919

\textsuperscript{52} The Local Boards Act XIV of 1920 Section 10

\textsuperscript{53} The four Taluk Boards were Anantapur, Gooty, Penukonda and Dharmavaram See: Administration Report of the District Board, Anantapur 1922-23.

\textsuperscript{54} W. Francies : Op. cit.,
boundaries and numbers of members in the Local Boards from time to time between 1884 and 1920 have also been sketched. A reference to the constitutional frame-work and the powers of these Local Bodies will form the content of the following Chapter.