



Growth & Impact of Urban Administration in the cities of U.P. During 19th Century

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Abstract

Before the advent of British in India, there was no such separate institution like municipal council or administration in the city, although the Ruler(Nawab or Raja), a Kotwal or chief police officer and his numerous officers or 'darogas' were responsible for many of the functions that later formed the core of municipal government. The new municipal committee which had been established in 1850s and 1860s in the towns had limited function and power and operated strictly within the defined limits. As the urban administration grew, in its scope and function in the nineteenth century, and became instrumental increasingly with making local improvements, Government found that it made sense to involve local leaders more and more closely with its activities. Acts of 1842 and 1850 made it possible to create municipal committees with power to levy octroi (a tax on commodities) and, with government sanction, to make regulations regarding public nuisance. Members of these municipal committees were nominated, but during the last forty years of the century they came mainly to be elected. The British sought support of privileged under the pretension of having them elected and giving them powers in the municipal boards. Infact, during 19th century, these local bodies remained cling to their colonial legacy; and the official component stayed to dominate the elected members. Mainly based of the crittical and analytical study of primary and secondary source material available this research work tries to understand the role of importance of native electric member of the local bodies. Paper suggest native members/actively engaged in securing economics benefits and helped in ferthering the interest of british by becoming active supporter of the British policy. A brief era of intense corporation and collusion between the government and the native elite was born through the establishment of the local bodies by British in the towns.

Before the advent of British in India, there was no such separate institution like municipal council or administration in the city, although the Ruler(Nawab or Raja), a Kotwal or chief police officer and his numerous officers or 'darogas' were responsible for many of the functions that later formed the core of municipal government. The Ruler commissioned public works ranging from palace and mosques to roads, drains and wells in the city. He heard complaints against his officers and other grievances during the daily darbar or public audience. The Ruler was the fountain head of the absolute power. While the new municipal committee which had been established in 1850s and 1860s in the towns had limited function and power and

operated strictly within the defined limits.

As the urban administration grew, in its scope and function in the nineteenth century, and became instrumental increasingly with making local improvements, Government found that it made sense to involve local leaders more and more closely with its activities. From 1814, ward committees of non-officials were set up to manage the police (ran and file). From 1837, savings, from this rate, were set aside for making improvements on the advice leaders. Acts of 1842 and 1850 made it possible to create municipal committees with power to levy octroi (a tax on commodities) and, with government sanction, to make regulations regarding public nuisance. Members of these municipal committees were nominated, but during the last forty years of the century they came mainly to be elected.

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The financial pressures of the period¹ sent signals to the British government that more money for local improvement had to be raised locally. This, it was felt, could only be done safely if elective representatives had a hand in raising these larger sums of money and spending them. Nowhere was the introduction of elective government more closely associated with the financial crisis than in the towns. The abolition of the temporary Income tax in 1865 was followed by the North-Western Provinces Municipalities Act of 1868, in which the elective principle was introduced as a more efficient method of 'drawing forth local resources and in ministering the local requirements.'² Lord Mayo's ambitious plan for public works and social services were to buy another fiscal crisis. As a result, in 1873, the elective principle was developed further.³ Lord Ripon faced the problem of revising these settlements combined necessity with principles; and in 1883 municipal boards with elected majorities were established in towns of U.P. with power to tax, to make by-laws and to spend on a wide range of civic amenities.⁴ Thus between 1868 and 1900, elected municipal boards were given power to tax, to spend and to make by-laws. Since government had a real impact upon towns, Non- Official Indians were going to wield a real influence over local life.

Of the Municipal boardmen, one obvious category was the wealthy, big commercial 'rais'- Ramchand Das of Allahabad, Girdharilal and Lala Shadimall of Lucknow, Damodar Das of Bareilly were among the few examples of such members in municipal boards of their respective towns. They often held the same seat for ten or twenty years and frequently sat on district boards. Their relationship with government was one of mutual interest. Many seats were held by representatives of average businessmen, eager to have their say about Octroi and market rate or contract. In the competition for seats in the municipal boards, wealth had an edge over. The 'Municipalities Act-1883' gave the right to vote to men of substance with incomes ranging from Rs. 120 to Rs.500 or house rent from Rs. 12 to Rs.60.⁵ Thus the qualifications for candidature were three times as high. In 1899, Auckland Colvin, as Lieutenant Governor complained that the result of the regulation was that - "The class which was formerly regarded, if not as being altogether without value, at least as beneath contempt, has assumed a position corresponding to the policy of the present masters of the country, who give to education and commerce increasing consideration, and to mere social position or military skill less attention".⁶ Thus basically, only moneyed and propertied had an access to municipal boards. The only interest represented in the municipal committees were the narrow, economic self interest of the

wealthy and propertied class; a religiously mixed group of bankers, 'wasiqdars' (political pensioners), Nawabs(noblemen) traders and loyal parishioners. The Britishers were quick to identify the prominent one in the city and drew them into cooperation with government. Since these men had personal stake in the stability and continuity of the British Raj, the nominated members of the two communities established themselves as a coterie that worked in collaboration with the British in the municipal arena and reaped personal reward for their loyalty in return. It becomes clear when we study the list the list of members of the municipality such as Daroga Mir Wazid Ali(Property owner and land owner) later Taluqdar, Girdhari Lall, Jeweler and Banker (chowk) and others who were members of the municipal committee of Lucknow.⁷ Like wise in Banaras, the members of the Naupatti banking fraternity, prominent since the days of the Rajas of Banaras, perpetuated their influence with in the municipality.⁸ Charan Das, treasurer for the Allahabad bank was a full member of the Allahabad District administrative staff.⁹ Similarly Jagat Narain 'Land Lord'¹⁰, The Tandons-banking and commercial community, were all members of the Allahabad local board.¹¹

Though, as many of the functions of local government were modernized after the Mutiny of 1857, commercial families moved into even more closer relationship with the authorities. As the Governor devolved the 'Political resources' to local bodies in which 'rais' commercial families were represented; the connection between the membership of local boards and economic benefit, became more obvious. Most of the bankers and property holders found it in their own interest to be associated with the collectors and officials.

Towards the end of the 19th century the scope of urban administration grew rapidly. As municipal work intensified gradually and meetings became impossibly numerous, some of the business came to be left to sub-committees or individuals, who, thus, had an important say in local affairs.¹² It seems as if the vacuum created by the deposition of the king and the dispersal of his court was filled by the municipal committee to serve as the front(albeit with a budget-a small fraction of the king) of all jobs and business contract in the city. Contracts were given for the supply of corn, salt, spirit and other essential commodities. The contractor reaped large fortunes.¹³ The Tondon clan of Allahabad city accumulated immense wealth as a Contractor;¹⁴ Munshi Nawal Kishore of Lucknow city who won contracts to print government publications and text books that made his printing shop the largest press in Asia; Mohseen-ud- dowlah and Mumtaz-ud-Doiolah who became trustees of the largest trust in the Lucknow;¹⁵ Mir Wazid Ali, who was appointed to municipal committee in 1864 by his close links with bureaucrats, managed to take a licence to manufacture salt in 1869 in Lucknow,¹⁶ were among the few examples of accumulating wealth through the administrative favours.

Thus membership of the Municipal Board could mean patronage in contracts. The large number of ambitious public works undertaken by the municipal boards meant that they were usually the largest source of business in the towns. A growing number of Indian collaborators thus used their official connections to oblige their own friends and relatives and appeared thereby to wield immense economic benefits when in fact they had no executive function in the council. "It is no uncommon thing", revealed one district officer, "for members of the Finance and Works' committees to apply for contracts, sub-let them at a higher rate, and sit as a board of inspection on the skimmed work of the sub contractors, and pass them as satisfactory".¹⁷

By serving in committees or sub-committees, the members not only enhanced their social status but also extracted favours as the price for unswerving loyalty to the regime of this mutual tacit-self interest - a brief era of intense cooperation and collusion between the government and the native elite was born. Till 19th century, the city 'rais' (men of wealth and local influence) became actively involved in attesting the new ruling elite to establish their mastery in the towns in exchange for economic benefits'. "Local dominance which had been marked before mutiny strengthened further by the development of municipal self government".¹⁸

Though the selected local councilmen had some leverage with patronage or the distribution of government contracts, but they had little scope for exercising any political power which was exclusively confined in the hands of the official members. The Lucknow Taj-ul-Akabar of 8th December 1874 published a letter of a correspondent about municipal committees on Oudh. "The committees", the writer remarked, "is composed of members who, although they were considered wealthy and respectable, are mere puppets, and sit in council like deaf and dumb people, staring at the chairs and tables, 'yes' and 'no' being the extent of their argument for or against any measure of importance. Now tell me is this what is called committee? Is this what we have to lean on for reforms? When the members were asked, we generally receive this reply who asks me? They (the English members) generally among themselves talk git pit (a derogatory term for English), and if they question me; I can acquiesce in what they say, Many things mentioned I do not even comprehend but to do our duty we obey as members".¹⁹ Thus, the non-official members of municipal boards had little real power.²⁰

In municipal body the control of officials²¹ was excessive which restricted the free functioning of non-official members. Government curbed the freedom of municipal boards and the influence of its non-official members, even when the alleged claim of "the principle of self-government is to be kept steadily in view, so far as may be compatible with public safety and happiness".²² The elected majority of non-officials could only block officials' suggestions²³ and if they wished to take the initiative, they were miserably dependent on the official approval for their proposals.

Till 1870s, and even since then, municipal committee was dominated by officials. The attempt to introduce an element of representation in the municipal committee in 1870s did not bring any noticeable difference in the power and position of the executive officer and officials. As Hugh Tinker states about the City Board : "In fact the elective principle was held in abeyance

. In general (municipal) boards were formed by the District Magistrate from among his Mulaqatis (acquaintances) and other respectable citizens".²⁴

The official chairman²⁵ was empowered to nominate a number of municipal members. As in the case of Allahabad city, usually Sunni Muslims, property holders, European tradesmen, and opponents of the most notable non-officials were nominated by the collector. For example, he nominated Lala Jagat Narain in 1888, who later on, proved to be one of the main supporters of the official policy during 1890s. So the elected members of the municipality were still unable to restrain or fight off the powers and influence of the officials.

Who, combined with the Anglo-Indian and Eurasian members and often with some fractional rivals of the elected wing, dominated the Municipal Board. In 1884, the franchise was extended by lowering of rental value of house ownership up to Rs. 6 per mensem in old town and Rs. 50 per mensem in the civil lines.²⁶ The Anglo-Indian and Eurasian members controlled the municipal resources as they secured one-third of the municipal seats in 1884.²⁷ Although they represented only three percent of the total population of the town in 1881.²⁸ Moreover till 1900 the control of magistrate or collector as the chairman of local Board continued over the other members of the boards, as the budget was placed totally under his control. For example in 1892 tax on land and houses in Allahabad city was imposed. It met with severe opposition and protest from citizens. However public opinion could not prevail, nor the majority of the non-officials in the board could prevent the chairman from the imposition of house tax in Allahabad, because of the provision of placing the budget totally under the control of the chairman.²⁹ Similarly the fate of municipalities of Banaras, Lucknow, Agra and Kanpur fared no better than Allahabad.

Thus, the British sought support of privileged under the pretension of having them elected and giving them powers in the municipal boards. Infact, during 19th century, these local bodies remained cling to their colonial legacy; and the official component stayed to dominate the elected members.

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- 20- The evidence of Madan Mohan Malaviya and Sundar Lal before the Decentralisation Commission, Royal Commission upon Decentration in India, PP.1908, XIV, PP.749 and 754, John Lowell Hill, Congress and Representative Institutions in the United Provinces, '1886-1901'
- 21- The chairman was the main restricting factors. In the municipalities of Lucknow, Banaras, Agra, Allahabad, Bareilly and Moradabad, he was appointed by the provincial government.
- 22- NWP Administration Report 1869-70, P.70
- 23- The U.P. municipal boards had the highest percentage of elected members in India, Tinker, Hugh, op.cit., P.48.
- 24- Tinker, Hugh op. cit., P.37
- 25- Usually the collector (District Magistrate) had become chairman of the towns since 1880s.
- 26- The pioneer (Allahabad), 15 July 1982, microfilm reel no. 1697, N.M.L The composition of Allahabad Municipal elecrorate in oct. 1884 was as following:

Population of the Municipal	Total Electorates	Hindus area	Muslims	European	Bengalis
150000	2858	1660	592	318	288

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