

EVOLUTION OF LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES



- ▶ Human institutions evolve over a period of time and in the process get adapted to the traditions and temper of the people”(Report of the Committee on democratic decentralization, Government of Maharashtra, 1969). It is therefore pertinent to understand the functioning of local self-governance institutions within the specific historical context.
- ▶ With the understanding gained by such study of the historical evolution of local self governing institutions and their functioning in different time periods in history, one is in a better position to understand their present working and likewise, suggest alterations,
- ▶ for further improvement. It is the functioning of the local institutions henceforth, that have been set up following the 73rd and the 74 th constitutional amendments, that needs to be observed and studied for the purpose of real democracy, for democracy inheres in processes; in the way things are actually done.

- ▶ Local self-governing institutions were disrupted following invasions from the north- west. Not much effort was made during the medieval period to reestablish the same. Mughal governance was highly centralised.
- ▶ Villages were penetrated only for purposes of collection of revenue, never that much for administrative purposes.
- ▶ While the emperor had ultimate control, his team of jagirdars, zamindars, who formed the aristocracy of the Mughals interacted with the peasantry, but for exploitative purposes.
- ▶ This complicated agrarian relations in the countryside. The pre –British Mughal system of administration had a highly bureaucratised hierarchy of officials

▶ POST INDEPENDENCE DEVELOPMENTS

- ▶ The plea for greater autonomy to the rural bodies received conceptual strength with the advent of Mahatma Gandhi on the national scene and his advocacy of the doctrine of the national development through autonomous rural organisations,
- ▶ which he strived to model on the lines of Panchayat system as it prevailed in Ancient India. He envisaged five-tier system of Panchayats, Taluka Panchayats, District Panchayats, Provincial Panchayats and All-India Panchayats.
- ▶ The administrative system envisaged by him was that of a pyramid whose broad base would comprise numerous village communities of the country

- ▶ **functional overlap with parastatals for key functions**
- ▶ The Constitution (74th Amendment) Act, 1992 empowered states to devolve the responsibility of 18 functions including urban planning, regulation of land use, water supply, and slum upgradation to ULBs. However, in most Indian cities including Bengaluru, a majority of these functions are carried out by parastatals. For example, in Bengaluru, the Bengaluru Development Authority is responsible for land regulation and the Karnataka Slum Clearance Board is responsible for slum rehabilitation.

► **Stressed municipal finances**

- Indian ULBs are amongst the weakest in the world in terms of fiscal autonomy and have limited effective devolution of revenue. They also have limited capacity to raise resources through their own sources of revenue such as property tax. Municipal revenue in India accounts for only one percent of the GDP (2017-18). This leads to a dependence on transfers by the state and central government.

► Powers of elected municipal officials

- The executive power with state-appointed municipal Commissioners and elected municipal officers differs across states. States like Tamil Nadu and Gujarat, and cities like Chennai and Hyderabad vest the executive power in the Commissioner. In contrast, the executive power of the Corporation is exercised by a Mayor-in council (consisting of the Mayor and up to 10 elected members of the Corporation) in Kolkata and Madhya Pradesh. This is unlike large metropolitan cities in other countries like New York and London, where elected Mayors are designated as executive heads. Experts have noted that charging Commissioners with executive power diluted the role of the Mayor and violated the spirit of self-governance.

Thank you

