

The towns and cities are regarded as the urban areas. Just as villages are big and small, urban areas are also big and small. The towns are bigger than villages. They have more people, more facilities : markets, schools, hospitals, police station, etc. Large important towns are called as **cities**. The problems of urban areas are a great deal different from villages. They also have their local self-government called Town Committee, Municipal Committee or Municipal Corporation. **They are governed by representatives elected by people.** Local self-government body in a town or city usually depends on the population. Some towns, with a population upto 20,000 are looked after by small Town Committees or Nagar Panchayats.

- Cities with a population between 20,000 and 10 lakh are looked after by Municipal Committees.
- Very big cities with a population of 10 lakhs and above i.e. million plus cities are looked after by Municipal Corporations.

All these take care of street lights, garbage collection, drinking water supply, cleaning of drains, education and health in their own capacity.

The area of a town committee, municipal committee or municipal corporation is divided into wards. One member/councillor is elected from each ward. Seats are reserved for Scheduled Castes and Tribes. Onethird of seats are reserved for women among both the general category and the reserved category. The elected persons are called **ward members** in case of committees and **councillors** in case of corporations.



Water tank



Street lights



Public park



Municipal dispensary

Functions of Municipal Committee

Town Committees and Municipal Committees

Small towns are in the process of change from a rural area to an urban area. Generally, Town Committees and Municipal Committees perform the following functions :

1. Supply of safe drinking water and electricity;
2. Removal of wastes and sewage disposal;
3. Health and sanitation;
4. Maintenance of parks and public buildings;
5. Keeping records of births and deaths ;
6. Construction and maintenance of public lavatories, urinals etc.

The chief source of income of a town committee and municipal committee are government grants and property tax.

Municipal Corporation

The elected members of the Municipal Corporation are known as **corporators** or **councillors**. They are elected every five years. The head or chairperson of the municipal corporation is called **Mayor**, who is elected by the people directly. The Mayor is known as the first citizen of the city. In this capacity the Mayor presides over every civic function of the city. The Mayor also welcomes the distinguished foreign guests to the city. The decisions about the needs and problems of the city are taken by the councillors in their meetings. Several committees for different jobs are also made. The groups of councillors who form committees debate the issues and decide action. All the councillors meet and they make a budget how the money is to be spent on different activities. Councillors try and ensure that the particular demands of their wards are placed before the entire council and approved. These decisions are then implemented by the administrative staff under the guidance of the Municipal Commissioner. The Municipal Commissioner is the Chief Executive Officer of the corporation appointed by the State Government.

The important functions of the Municipal Corporation are water supply, garbage and sewage disposal, sanitation, health, education and housing. Its work also includes to construct and maintain roads, bridges, parks, etc. It also maintains fire-fighting services.



Municipal truck for collecting garbage

The Municipal Corporation has a number of workers for every job. It needs a large number of workers especially for removal of garbage and cleaning the drains. At times conflicts arise between the administrators and the workers over the salaries and other benefits. However, these days, the commissioners of many corporations across the country are saving money by hiring private contractors for various activities. This is called subcontracting. Thus enough part of work is being done by the workers appointed by private contractors. These contractors appoint the workers at fixed salary for a particular time period.

Main sources of income of municipal corporation are property tax, water tax, education tax, entertainment tax and grants-in-aid from state government for certain specific schemes.

Participation of People

The corporations have requested the citizens to place two dustbins at home. Then we sort our own garbage into two parts— (1) paper, metal, glass and plastic which can be recycled (to make useful products) and (2) organic (peels of vegetables and fruits, pieces of bread, leftover food, pieces of cotton cloth, etc). It makes the work of the sanitation workers much easier. It helps to remove the rotting organic garbage separately without polluting the whole lot on larger areas.

Some poor people collect paper, metal, glass and metal from the heaps of garbage. They are in danger of catching diseases. The sanitation workers collecting and disposing garbage from the street corners also face the same hazard. Therefore, people must cooperate in sorting out their own garbage into dust bins.

Community Protest

If any public services such as removal of garbage, water supply or electric supply are suspended, people (men, women and children) gather at the corporation office and stage a demonstration. In one instance, the garbage gathered at the street corner was not carried away by the municipal trucks and the drains had not been cleaned for days. Usually the men were away on their duties. The women and children began to fall ill due to the unhygienic condition of the streets. The residents of the area reached the municipal commissioner to get the things done. But the commissioner began giving excuses saying that the corporation did not have enough trucks. Then some people asked him, "Do not you have enough trucks to collect garbage from the rich localities ?" After a long protest, at last, the corporation workers began to clean that locality but it was not regular. Then after another larger and more noisy protest the sanitation service in that locality became more regular.

The Plight of the Poor

Many poor people in the city work as domestic servants as well as work for the corporation at daily wages keeping the city clean. Yet the slums in which they live are quite filthy. This is because these slums seldom have any water and sanitation facilities, proper drainage and regular electricity supply. The reason often given by the Municipal Corporation is that the land in which those poor people have made their homes does not belong to them and they do not pay taxes. However, people living in middle class neighbourhoods pay little in taxes compared to the amount the corporation spends on them for facilities of street lights, regular garbage collection, parks, etc. Also the property taxes collected by the corporation from all the residents of the city including the rich localities makes up only 25-30 per cent



Kabadi wallah dealing in discarded paper, metal, glass and plastic.




Hazardous way of collecting garbage



Safe way of disposing garbage



A Slum



of its income. Therefore, the reasons given by the corporation are meaningless and it should spend more money on slum localities. The Municipal Corporation should respect the ideals of equality and justice in the Constitution and provide the poor in the city with the same facilities that the rich get. However, with the rising awareness in the people, some facilities have been given to the slum dwellers. One of the reasons is that they are the vote banks for the leaders to be elected to the corporation and legislature.

Plague in the City of Surat

Plague is a very dangerous disease. It spreads to kill thousands of people. The city of Surat had a plague scare in 1994. Several people lost their lives and more than three lakh deserted the city to be away from the deadly disease.

Surat was one of the dirtiest cities till 1994. Houses, hotels and restaurants would dump their garbage into the nearest drain or street which made it very difficult for the sanitation workers to collect and transfer the garbage into the selected dumps. In addition to this the Municipal Corporation did not collect the garbage as often as it should have and this led to the situation getting worse. The garbage rotted badly. All the conditions of the breakout of a plague were ripe. The four elements that flare up a plague — agents (the germs), vectors (fleas), reservoirs (rats) and hosts (humans) — were all present. The human host was multiplying with migrant workers from villages in search of work flocking to progressive Surat. As a result the garbage heaps kept on getting bigger and bigger with little collection by the municipal corporation. Pools of dirty stagnant water filled the alleys. Inevitably, rapid person-to-person contact and fleas on the ground spread the disease.

Then the Municipal Corporation of Surat was assisted by the State Government of Gujarat, the Central Government and the WHO (World Health Organisation). The sick patients were treated and kept in a restricted area for treatment. Large amounts of antibiotics were given to general public as a preventive measure. The fleas were eliminated by fumigation and spraying of disinfectants particularly on the pools of stagnant water and garbage sites. The scare of the plague ensured that the municipal corporation cleaned up the whole city. The rats were killed and removed. Once the cleanliness drive started, Surat has become and remained the second cleanest city in India after Chandigarh.



Key Words

- » Town Committee : local self-government in towns.
- » Municipal Committee : local self-government in small cities.
- » Municipal Corporation : local self-government in big cities.
- » Mayor : the elected chief of the municipal corporation.
- » Municipal commissioner : the chief executive officer of the municipal corporation appointed by the state government.
- » Budget : a finance plan of income and expenditure for the ensuing year, drawn in advance.
- » Ward Councillors : members of the municipal corporation elected as representatives by the people from various wards of the city.

SUMMARY

- ▶ The towns and cities are regarded as the urban areas.
- ▶ The local self-government in a town, small city and big city is called town committee, municipal committee and municipal corporation respectively.
- ▶ The functions of the local self-governments are supply of safe drinking water and electricity, removal of wastes and sewage disposal, health, education, etc.
- ▶ The chief sources of income of the local self-government bodies are grants in aid from the state government, property tax, water tax, entertainment tax, etc.
- ▶ The town or city is divided into various wards. One member or councillor is elected from each ward.
- ▶ The Mayor heads the municipal corporation who is elected by the people directly.
- ▶ The Municipal commissioner is the chief executive officer of the corporation appointed by the state government.
- ▶ The administrative staff and other workers carry out the decisions taken at the meeting of the ward councillors presided by the Mayor.
- ▶ If public services are not carried out properly by the corporation the people stage a demonstration at the corporation office.
- ▶ All people, rich and poor, have the right for equal facilities.

Exercise Time

A. Tick (✓) the only correct choice amongst the following :


1. _____ is elected by the people.
a. Mayor
b. Municipal Commissioner
c. Municipal Council
d. Town committee
2. Till the year 1994, _____ was considered one of the dirtiest city in India.
a. Surat
b. Mumbai
c. Ahmedabad
d. Chennai
3. Cities with a population between 20,000 and 10 lakh are looked after by Municipal _____.
a. Committee
b. Corporation
c. Commissioner
d. government
4. The towns and cities are regarded as the _____ areas.
a. rural
b. urban
c. village
d. cities
5. _____ of the seats are reserved for women in local self-government.
a. one-third
b. half
c. one-fourth
d. full

B. Match the following :

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Local self-government body of a small city | a. Councillors |
| 2. Local self-government body of a big city | b. Mayor |
| 3. The members of Municipal Corporation | c. Municipal Corporation |
| 4. Local self-government body of a town | d. Municipal Committee |
| 5. Chairperson of the Municipal Corporation | e. Town Committee |

C. Fill in the blanks :

1. Cities are divided into many _____ for the election of councillors.
2. Municipal commissioner is _____ by the state government.
3. Mayor is _____ by the people.

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4. Municipal corporation collects property _____ on residential houses.
 5. At present, _____ is the second cleanest city in India.

D. Write true (T) or False (F) against the following statements in given brackets :

1. Municipal Corporation looks after the sanitation of the city.
2. The local self-government in a big city is called Municipal Committee.
3. The local self-government of a city collects taxes from the residents.
4. The Mayor is elected by the councillors.
5. Ward councillors are nominated by the government.

E. Answer in one word or one phrase :

1. For how many years are the ward councillors elected ?
2. By whom the Municipal commissioner is appointed ?
3. Who is the head of the Municipal Corporation ?
4. Which is the cleanest city in India ?
5. Which was one of the dirtiest city in India in 1994 where plague spread ?

F. Answer these questions briefly :

1. What are the functions of local self-government ?
2. Who is a municipal councillor ? What is his/her work ?
3. List four ways in which the work of the Municipal Corporation affects the life of a city-dweller.
4. Name the types of dustbins, the city dwellers should have at their houses and their use.
5. What are the different types of local self-government in towns and cities ?
6. What are the sources of income of the Municipal Corporation ?
7. What is sub-contracting ? Why does the corporation favour contract workers over its own employees ?
8. Why should the slum-dwellers be given the same facilities as given to rich people ?

G. Answer these questions in detail :

1. What are the various functions of a municipal committee and municipal corporation ?
2. Discuss the reasons of the plague epidemic in Surat and the ways adopted to get rid of it.
3. How are the urban local government bodies different from the rural local bodies ?

PROJECT WORK

1. Write a report on the measures the local self government has currently taken in your town/city to ensure cleanliness — Garbage disposal, spraying of pesticides, etc.
2. Write down a letter to the concerned local government authority relating to your problems of bad roads, power cut, lack of supply of drinking water, etc.