

## **CHAPTER XXXIII.**

### **Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV.**

#### **Various Administrative Improvements—1913—1918.**

##### **Local Self-Government.**

Local Self-Government in Mysore had achieved a fair measure of success and it was now deemed advisable to take a step forward. A new Bill to amend the Municipal Regulation of 1906 was accordingly introduced in the Legislative Council on the 29th June 1917. The legislation effected in 1906 although based on liberal principles was found not to have produced any marked results, especially in the case of Minor Municipalities owing to the preponderance of the official element and to too much subordination of the councils to Government officials. The Regulation was also too complex for the smaller towns to which it could not be applied, thereby causing the anomaly of the existence of Municipal Boards created under the executive orders of Government alongside of those constituted under statutory provisions. In 1915 the Dewan in his address to the Representative Assembly had stated that the Local Bodies were not playing their legitimate role in the administration of the country and that the apathy displayed by these bodies was attributable chiefly to a deficiency in the elected popular element and to the want of reasonable powers of control over their own funds. There were at this time before Government two well-considered reports, one by the Local Self-Government Committee and the other by the Local Finance Committee. The first committee was appointed in February 1914 under the presidency of the late Sir M. Kantaraj Urs who was a Member of the State Council at the time and the second in May 1914 under the chairmanship of Dewan Bahadur C. Srinivasa Iyengar who was a retired member of the same Council. In 1915 a conference of Local Boards and Municipalities had been held in Mysore which was opened by His Highness the Yuvaraja. At this conference Sir K. P. Puttanna Chetty who had considerable experience in municipal problems invited attention to the fact that Government exercised too much

supervision and control over Municipalities and that thereby those institutions had come to be regarded as mere adjuncts of Government. Under the rules as they stood at the time, the Deputy Commissioner was the president of all the Municipalities outside the Regulation in the district and also of all the Regulation Municipalities in the taluks. The sub-division Assistant Commissioners were the presidents of all Regulation Municipalities in the taluks of which they were in revenue charge. The Local Self-Government Committee very rightly pointed out in their report that the nominal appointment of Deputy Commissioners as presidents of these small Municipalities had been of very little value inasmuch as they hardly attended any of their meetings. Although the Regulation of 1906 was meant to mark a distinct advance in the principles of local self-government so far as Municipalities were concerned, it really did not affect the municipal administration of a majority of the Boards which had been established without a statutory basis, though it was admitted that these Boards undoubtedly tended to educate the people in the art of managing local affairs.

The object of the amending Bill of 1917 was to bring within the purview of the Regulation such of the non-Regulation Municipalities and the Unions in inam villages as were fit to be constituted into Minor Municipalities. Under the new constitution, an increase in the elected element was introduced, one-third being increased to one-half in the case of Town Municipal Councils and two-thirds in the case of City Municipalities. The Government also accepted the principle recommended by the committee and the conference of the election of Presidents and Vice-Presidents in the City and Town Municipal Councils and also of providing in the Regulation itself for a full-time paid President who might or might not be an official. Another amendment in the Bill was intended to invest Municipal Councils with enlarged powers, limiting the control of Government to broad questions only. In order to give an increased scope of work to the Municipal Councils, power was also reserved by the Government to vest selected Municipal Councils with the control of Elementary Education, Medical Relief including vaccination, and Muzrai institutions.

Again as regards the Local Boards, the Regulation of 1902 which governed them was characterised by the above Committee as 'illiberal' in its provisions. The Taluk Boards were found to be wholly inactive for lack of any distinct sphere of work for them. The revenue officials of all grades were invariably Presidents from the Deputy Commissioner downwards and the Amildars were nominal presidents of more than one Union in their taluks. Although in 1907-08 villages comprising three hundred houses or 1000 inhabitants were authorised without any distinction to be constituted into Unions, the Union administration had not proved any more successful than before.

In 1917 it was considered that under the circumstances mentioned above, instead of introducing amendments to the Local Boards Regulation of 1902 it was desirable to recast it as a whole and to introduce it in the Legislative Council as a new Bill. The most important feature in the new Regulation after it emerged from the Legislative Council was the insertion of a chapter on Village Panchayets and the reason assigned for this addition was that the village should for ever be the unit of local self-government and that greater attention was therefore to be paid to the improvement of village administration, thereby laying a surer foundation for the more efficient development of local self-government. A large number of Village Improvement Committees had been established under the executive orders of Government and were already working in the State on definite principles. It was now intended to place on a statutory basis all those committees which had attained a fair amount of efficiency and to notify them as Panchayets. The majority of the members of these Panchayets were to be elected as well as the President. Their functions were classified under three heads—1. Ordinary duties connected with the maintenance of roads, sanitation, water-supply and other like items; 2. improvement work; and 3. education, irrigation, village courts and other connected work. The Bill also contained the necessary provision for giving these Panchayets financial autonomy, subject to the general supervision of the Taluk Boards. The Panchayets besides having their own funds accruing from house-tax, taxes on vacant village sites and other items were also to have

a definite portion of the local cess and Mohatarfa, apart from any Government contributions they might receive.

Next as regards the Taluk Boards, the main defect in the system as it existed then was that these Boards had no definite responsibilities and functions and so far had been only the agents of District Boards in name. The Government in the main accepted the recommendations of the Local Self-Government Committee, according to which there was to be an elected majority in all the Boards, both district and taluk. The Taluk Boards were to be given independent powers subject only to the control of the District Boards to administer and control only those functions and services which were more or less localised, leaving to the District Boards functions and services which required a co-ordinate organisation throughout the district. This necessitated a separate Taluk Board Fund for administrative purposes as well as a separate budget, for all of which necessary provision was made in the new Bill. The Bill also contained in accordance with the views of the Committee provisions for the transfer of institutions such as minor Muzrai institutions, primary education, medical relief and veterinary dispensaries. The Government's desire was ultimately to develop the District Boards into District Councils and the Bill accordingly provided that in matters that did not ordinarily come within their functions, it was open to the Boards to pass resolutions on the subjects outside their cognisance and send them to Government for consideration.

Sir Albion Banerji who belonged to the Indian Civil Service and was employed for the time being as a Member of the Mysore State Council, in piloting this Bill through the Legislative Council on the 29th June 1917 quoted from Harris' 'Problems of Local Self-Government' the following passage in order to indicate the spirit which lay behind the Bill: "If we endeavour to formulate one or two of the principles underlying the best lines for administration to follow, the first will undoubtedly be that local government is the business of the local authorities and that all that the Central Government has to do is to give them information and guidance, to apply the

whip or the brake. Complete independence of the Central Government is certainly undesirable, but local authorities must be freer than they are at present to make experiments, even to make mistakes. Continuous meddlesome interference by the Central Government hampers good government, delays progress, destroys a sense of responsibility, and this in turn discourages the best men from taking part in the local administration."

On the 28th September 1917 when the report of the Select Committee on the above Bill was considered in the Legislative Council, Sir A. R. Banerji strongly deprecated the idea of representation on communal grounds which had been urged by some of the members, though rejected by the Select Committee as a whole. "The best representatives in Municipal Councils and Local Boards are certainly those who do not take a sectarian or communal view of their duties and responsibilities but have a broader outlook and discharge their duties as true citizens. The whole principle of communal representation is opposed to every sound idea of advancement, solidarity and the promotion of common interests so far as Municipal and Local Boards' administration is concerned." Again, when the same member brought forward a motion at the meeting of the Legislative Council held on the 28th March 1918 to pass the Bill into law, he reverted to the subject of communal representation and once more explained his views in these words:—"The expression 'communal representation' only means to me the interests of minorities amongst the population who on account of their low numerical strength are unable to cope with electoral contests with the majorities..... When legislating on affairs relating to local self-government, the Legislative Council would be entering into dangerous ground if it attempted to solve questions relating to such delicate matters as sectarian and caste differences. What one would hope with the refining process of civilisation and enlightenment is to see a gradual coalescence of the different communities that constitute the Hindu population of the country and a corresponding increase in the homogeneity of interests and a spirit of equality of rights and obligations in all dealings between man and man."

The Bill on receiving the assent of the Maharaja became law as Regulation V of 1918. In accordance with its provisions, the Municipalities were classified into Minor, Town and City Municipal Councils. The Deputy Commissioners, as a general rule, ceased to be members of such councils and Amildars were appointed as presidents of taluk headquarter Municipalities as well as of Minor Municipal Councils in the taluk, except when an Assistant Commissioner or a non-official member was appointed as such. Several Town and Minor Municipal Councils were allowed the privilege of electing their own Vice-Presidents.

As regards the Local Boards, the Local Boards Regulation II of 1902 had been amended by Regulation IX of 1911 whereby power was conferred on the District Boards to frame bye-laws for the regulation of markets, slaughter-houses, cart-stands, hotels, burial and burning grounds, and for the control of unwieldy traffic on roads. In 1916-17 rules were framed for the election of Vice-Presidents for the District Boards. Subsequently, however, to give effect to the the Government Order of November 1916 on the scheme of local self-government as recommended by the special committees already referred to as well as to consolidate the existing law, a revised Regulation known as the Mysore Local Boards and Village Panchayets Regulation VI of 1918 was passed on the 25th June 1918. The number of members on District and Taluk Boards was increased so as to provide for an elected majority in all Districts and Taluk Boards, giving independent powers to Taluk Boards subject only to a general control by the District Board and allotting separate funds to Taluk Boards. The Regulation also provided for the establishment of Village Panchayets and authorised them to undertake—1. the ordinary maintenance of roads, sanitation, water-supply, drainage; 2. improvement works as specified in the village improvement scheme; and 3. all other communal work connected with education and irrigation. The Regulation also empowered the Local Boards to raise a special cess for guaranteeing repayment of loans for specified purposes.