

Local Self-Government in Urban Areas

Look at the illustration of a city given below. What do you think are the differences between villages and cities? What kinds of public amenities are needed and available in cities? What are the differences in livelihoods of people in urban areas? What kind of amenities do such works require? Discuss these points in the class.

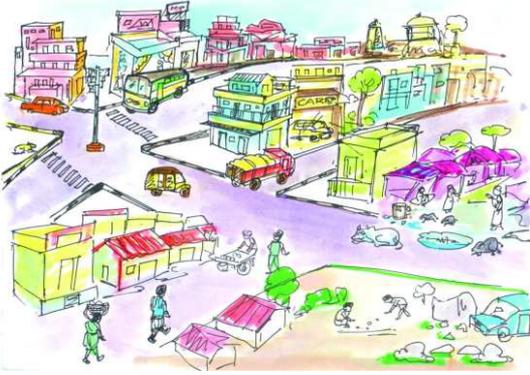


Fig: 14.1 A view of a city

Towns and cities are places where large number of people live. Roads in many parts of the cities are wider and busier. There are more shops, vehicles, and industries in cities. They require a lot more planning and amenities than in rural areas. Moreover,

every year more and more people are shifting to towns in search of employment and livelihood. So the size of the cities is growing day by day and new colonies are coming up constantly. Many of these colonies are in the form of slums in which

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a large number of poor people live and work. All these people have to be assured water and electricity supply, transport, schools, hospitals etc. A major problem in cities is the disposal of waste materials or garbage and drainage.

Thus providing public amenities in towns and cities is a very complex job and it needs a large organisation. This organisation is called Municipality. There are three kinds of municipal bodies depending upon the size of the population:

Nagar Panchayat: 20,000 to 40,000 people; Municipal Council: 40,000 to 3,00,000 people; Municipal Corporation: More than 3,00,000 people.

Formation of Municipalities

Like the village panchayats the municipalities too are formed through elections. Urban areas are also divided into wards and people are elected as representatives. These representatives are called Councillors in municipal towns and corporators in Corporation cities. Apart from the ward Councillors there are also Mayors, or Chairpersons who head the institution like the Sarpanches in the Panchayats.



Fig: 14.2 Bheemunipatnam Municipality
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Fig: 14.3 Drinking water

- ♦ The rules of elections with regard to the municipalities are similar to that of panchayat. Compare the information given about Panchayat and correct the wrong statements given below:
 - i. Elections to the municipalities are held every five years.
 - ii. Voter should be 19 years or older.
 - iii. There is only one representative for each ward.
 - iv. His or her name is listed in the voter list of particular ward of the village.
 - v. All ward representatives are men.
 - vi. Anyone above the age of 21 can contest the elections.
- ♦ With the help of your teacher, identify Municipal Councils or Municipal Corporations in your district.

Do you know the oldest municipality in Andhra Pradesh? It is Bheemunipatnam (also known as Bhimili) in Visakhapatnam District, which was established in 1861. It celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2011. It is one of the oldest municipalities in India.

How does the Municipality work?

The municipality has a lot of tasks to perform like water supply, street lighting, maintaining and building roads, drainage and garbage disposal, running schools, ration shops, hospitals etc., besides taking up new developmental works. Now all this cannot be done by a few people or by the Corporators or Councillors alone. For this purpose the municipalities employ a large number of workers, officers and clerks and accountants. Each municipality has a number of departments, each headed by an officer who is responsible for the proper work of the staff related to that department.



fig: 14.4. Sanitation work

For example there will be water supply department, electricity department, education department, garbage disposal department etc.

You may be wondering as to what is the work of the Councillors? Actually the Councillors keep in touch with the people of the ward to understand their needs and problems and discuss them in the municipality meetings. In order to ensure that so many kinds of work are properly

thought about, the municipality has a number of committees and the Councillors are assigned to these committees. The work of these committees is to review the functioning of the municipality department, and plan new works to be undertaken. They prepare proposals which are discussed in the municipality meetings and passed. These decisions are implemented by the officers and employees of the municipality.

The ward Councillors ensure that the needs of their wards are placed before the council when decisions are taken. Also they keep in touch with the people of the ward who may take their problems to them. Let us look at an example of how people of a ward can solve their problems by approaching their ward Councillor.

- ♦ Can you distinguish the functions of municipalities with that of panchayats?
- ♦ How do the departments help in the work of the municipalities?
- ♦ If you had to set up committees for the running of your school, make a list of such.

A community representation

Yasmin Khala said, "Earlier even our colony used to have garbage lying all over, and if this remains uncollected it attracts dogs, rats and flies. Also, people get ill from the smell. The women were very unhappy about the situation. Then it was Gangabai who said that we should meet the Ward Councillor and protest since we elected him. She gathered a small group of women and went to his house.



Fig: 14.5 submission of a letter to authorities for sanitation

He came out and asked them what was wrong. Gangabai described the situation of the locality to him. He promised to go with them the next day to meet the Commissioner. He asked Gangabai to get a petition signed by all the adults in the locality saying that garbage was not being collected. That evening children ran from house to house making sure that as many families as possible signed the petition.

The next morning a large group of women and the Ward Councillor went to the Municipal Corporation office. The Commissioner met with this large group and said that the corporation did not have enough trucks. But Gangabai replied, "But you seem to have enough trucks to collect garbage from the other localities."

He promised that "he would take care of it immediately". "If it was not done in two days protest would continue" said Yasmin Khala.

"So did the streets get cleaned?" asked Rehana, who never let things remain unfinished. Yes that day onward sanitation service in this locality became regular.

- ♦ What should ward Councillors do to ensure that all amenities are working properly in their wards?
- ♦ If you find garbage piled up in front of your house what would you do?

Funds for the Municipalities

Municipalities levy a number of taxes – like tax on houses, water and street light taxes, taxes on shops, film tickets, etc. However the income from these taxes is not enough for the work of the municipalities and they depend upon grants from the government. The government allots funds for different projects (like road construction) and also for regular work of the municipalities.

Sub-contracting of Work

In order to serve better, several municipalities across the country are hiring contractors to collect and process garbage. This is called Sub-Contracting. This means that the work that was earlier being done by municipality workers is now being done by a private company. Collecting garbage is also quite a dangerous job and the authorities have to see that contract workers have access to safety measures like gloves and masks while working.

- If you live in a town find out how many people work under the municipality and how many are employed through contractors. What kind of problems do they face?
- Why do municipalities prefer to give out work on sub-contract?

Municipal Workers

Let us read about a day of a Municipal worker.

It was Monday morning, 5 AM. Chinna did not want to get up and go for work. Yesterday she did not have to work, it was Sunday. But that means there will be more sweeping and more bins to clean. All those living in Starlight colony too have had their holidays and have thrown more waste in the bins. The street will have more wrappers and plastic bags that were thrown away after their shopping. The more the waste those people throw the harder it becomes for Chinna to sort out. Her own colony had no dustbins, only garbage heap. Her hutment which is next to the drainage pipe coming from other parts of the city was leaking. Dirty water stagnates near the hand pump.

Chinna barely managed to collect water for the house, and clean up herself. And there is Nazma already at her door. "Hurry up! If we do not reach Starlight colony in another 10 minutes and start cleaning we will miss the truck that comes, at 6:45." Chinna, drank some hot water, shook her daughter's shoulders and told "I am leaving for work, do not be late to school."

Chinna and Nazma, walked all the way to Starlight colony. There are no buses running between their colony and the Starlight colony. They collected the brooms and the cart from their regular place. The old cart was making all sorts of noise. Both of them moved along the road side and began to sweep. There were all sorts of waste. The dustbins were overflowing, just in one day. People had thrown their waste outside the dustbins. In many places people had left the waste in the open: household left over; wrappers from the shops; clothe pieces from tailoring shops....

Sweeping the street is one part of the work. After piling up the waste, they have to load them into the truck. They often handpick the plastic bags, bottles, milk pouches, etc from kitchen waste, vegetable peels, bones, and other bio-degradable material. Some years ago with much fanfare there were green waste bins and blue waste bins put in the street corners. It was thought that people will separate their waste. For about three four weeks at least some people threw their waste after segregation. But now Chinna and Nazma have to do this. They were also given some carts to carry around the waste. Chinna knows that many people consider their profession unclean. While the municipal workers clean the entire city to make it inhabitable to the people living there they are not treated properly.

Apart from sweepers there are also truck drivers and other helpers who are employed by the Contractor. All the waste from different parts of the city is dumped at the allotted places.

- Where does Chinna work? Who employs her?
- What are the different activities they have to do, for cleaning the colony?
- Is the work of Chinna and Nazma respected by all the people in the society?
- Chinna lives in one area and helps in cleaning another colony. Can you compare the amenities that are available in the two different colonies?
- What do you feel about this wide difference between the two colonies?
- Draw an imaginary illustration of the two colonies.

Tenali Municipality shows the way

Tenali Municipality in Guntur district has turned the collection and disposal of garbage into a profitable proposition for the municipality. The woman sanitation workers have been renamed 'Nagara Deepika' and men as 'Street Decorators'. They are generating income while keeping the town bin-free. Success mantra of the Tenali model of garbage disposal is complete and effective ban on the use of plastic cups, polythene bags, etc. and segregation of wet and dry garbage at source—be it in the kitchen or in a factory. There is no littering on streets/ drains anymore as one sanitary worker collects from 1,400 households using an autorickshaw or cycle rickshaw at a fixed

time everyday. A sustained campaign has ensured that all houses adhere to this habit of separating their waste in two buckets. The recyclable dry waste is sold at Rs.3 a kg to a private buyer. The wet waste is also used for making compost. Out of 100 tonnes of garbage collected, 40 tonnes are sold for recycling generating a revenue of Rs.15 lakh per annum. Tenali municipality has won several awards for this programme. The other municipalities are also slowly adopting similar type of effective practices for disposal of garbage.



Fig: 14.6. 'Nagara Deepikas' at work in Tenali.
Do you think it is safe for them to collect garbage with bare hands?

Key words

Self Government
Municipal council
Municipal corporation
Sub contracting
Bio-degradable material

Improve your learning

1. How is garbage collected in your locality? What happens to it?
2. What are the public amenities which a municipality provides but are not provided by a Panchayat?
3. If you live in a town prepare a list of works done by the municipality in your ward during the last two years.
4. Pochamma says that water does not come in her street tap for more than half an hour and several people queue up to fill their buckets. What would you advise her to do to solve this problem?
5. Xavier repairs electric faults in street lights. He is employed by an electricity contractor who has been engaged by the municipality. Xavier was injured due to electric shock while at work and his hand got burnt. He could not work for two months. He did not get any wages for this period and was also dismissed by his contractor. What would you advise him to do?
6. Some people think that the job of the municipality is to provide public amenities at the least cost while others think that the municipality should also provide dignified working conditions for those who work for it. What do you think? Give your arguments.
7. What are the services of corporation in helping the poor?
8. Will you differentiate the village from the city? How?
9. What do you like most in cities and villages?
10. Comment on the functioning of a local body in your area?

Projects

1. Visit any amenity provided by nearby municipality like bus stand, hospital, school, market, public toilets, etc. and prepare a report on their condition. Prepare a poster on them.
2. Interview two municipal workers and prepare a poster on their daily schedule and the problems they face.
3. Collect one week news clippings from newspapers on the working of municipalities and prepare a summary of the reports.