



Ludhiana urban development administration

Dr. Pushpinder Kaur

Associate Professor, Department of History, B.Z.S.F.S.Khalsa Girls College, Morinda (Ropar) Punjab, India

Abstract

The technological advancements and industrial placements being concentrated in cities, have altogether changed the complexion of urban centres thereby adding complicated and multidimensional problems to the civic and seemingly simple duties of urban government. The concept of urban government has undergone tremendous changes.

Keywords: municipal government, corporation, rate payers, Punjab municipal act, town planning organization

Introduction

The city administration was centralised completely in the hands of the British in 1843 when Ludhiana became a revenue district of the British ^[1]. Local administration started during 1853-54 with the establishment of civil lines ^[2]. Ludhiana Municipal committee was constituted in 1867 ^[3]. It was formed on the suggestion of the Royal Army Sanitary Commission ^[4]. The provincial government was vested with the power to set up committees in towns and cities to cater to water supply, electrification and cleanliness ^[5]. Soon after the formation of municipal committee some changes were made. The Punjab Act of 1873 made election permissive. This act empowered the Government to authorise rate payers to elect municipal commissioners in the larger towns ^[6] all elected members were big merchants and influential men. Though the natives constituted a majority, the committee was actually dominated by official members. The Punjab Act XIII of 1884 left the introduction of the elective principle in the discretion of the provincial Government but gave municipal committees power to elect their presidents and vice-presidents subject to government approval. It also provided that once the elective principle was introduced it could not be withdrawn except on the application of the majority of electors or for reasons affecting the public interest. But this act remained inoperative till 1919 ^[7].

In 1886 Ludhiana Municipal committee was raised to a class II Municipality ^[8]. In 1911, vide the Punjab Municipal Act III, all previous Act were replaced by a fresh Act but that too was not properly implemented before 1919.

In 1917-18 there was a lot of hope for democratization of the municipal administration ^[9]. The resolution of the Government of India, dated 16th May, 1918, provided for substantial changes in municipal administration like elected majority; power to secure official experience without giving the right to vote; minority representation by nomination; an elected non-official president; full liberty in imposing or altering taxation; and full control over the allocation of funds. In 1923, the Punjab Government responded to the Resolution ^[10] by reducing the number of appointed members from 1/3 to 1/4, framing election rules which provided for an Election

Commission, providing Executive Officers for the city with a population of one lakh.

After 1923, the strength of elected members were raised from 2/3 to 3/4 by an amendment made on the Punjab Municipal Act III of 1911 ^[11]. In 1931, the Punjab Municipal (Executive Officer) Act II of 1931 provided for the appointment powers of Executive Officer in Municipalities to which the Act was extended by the government. In 1930, voter's qualifications were also reduced ^[12]. Before this only rate payers had the right to vote. The election rules of 1930 provided that any male/female who had attained the age of 21 could be the voter. The only condition that he/she should be a resident of the city within the municipality for 12 months preceding the first day of the month in which the roll was published ^[13]. The member was expected to be able to read and write Urdu, English, Hindi (in Devangari script) or Punjabi (in Persian or Gurmukhi Script) ^[14].

Ludhiana was one of the 10 cities in the Punjab in which communal representation was introduced in 1917 ^[15]. The communal electorate Act provided seats not only for Muslims but also for the Sikhs ^[16]. Communal electorate and the election of the president on that basis brought with it an atmosphere of suspicion and animosity. This feeling was very much marked during the election of 1931. All the communities tried to inflate their number for getting more representation in the city administration. Government wanted to keep the Presidents and Vice Presidents under control. So they introduced 'communal pact for the election of the presidents in 1937. Government managed all these through the nominated members.

In 1947 there were 26 members in Ludhiana Municipal Committee. In 1948 they elected their president. Nine members walked out of the house, the seventeen members elected Master Kishan Singh as president ^[17].

In accordance with para 5 of the Punjab Government Notification no. 1235-13 and C-47/408 dated 6.1.1948 all appointments of the displaced employees of local bodies from West Punjab employed in local bodies in East Punjab be approved by the committee ^[18].

The Municipal committee of Ludhiana was never completely

free to act as it wanted. A clause in the Punjab Municipal Act empowered the Deputy Commissioner and the Governor of the province to suspend or cancel respectively any resolution or election result if it was deemed to be determined in public interest ^[19] this provision was sometimes effectively used. After independence The Punjab Municipal Act which governs the structure and operations of the Ludhiana Municipal Committee specifically provides the Deputy Commissioner's intervention. He can inspect any municipal property or any municipal work in progress. He can suspend any municipal resolutions or stop any action by the municipality which in his opinion is in excess of the powers of the municipality. The state government also empowered Deputy Commissioner under the emergency provisions. Currently Ludhiana Municipal Committee has been similarly taken over by the State and the administrator looks after the Municipal Administrations.

The Municipal Committee evolved its own rules of conducting its business. They decided that the meeting of the municipality should be held every month in the Town Hall. Meeting could be held only if at least 10 members were present. The President could call any emergency meeting on the request of the members. Various sub-committees were formed to provide efficiency to the work. They were also decided to maintain regular proceedings of the meetings. After the Punjab Municipal Act III of 1911 the presence of half the members was made compulsory ^[20] and for ordinary meeting the bye laws of Ludhiana Municipal Committee made the presence of at least 1/3 members compulsory to complete the quorum ^[21]. In the absence of the President, the Vice-President could convene ordinary or special meeting by submitting an application signed at least by five members ^[22].

The advent of independence in India in August, 1947 opened a new chapter in the growth of Municipal Government. India adopted a new constitution in 1950 based on the ideals of justice, liberty and equality and wedded to the evolution of a welfare state. Under constitution, 'local self-government' became a state subject so that the state legislature has the exclusive powers to make laws with respect of local-self Government ^[23]. Local self-government acquired new significance, a new status and a new role to play as the chief architect of community making and the base of pyramid of democratic set up in the country.

After independence, in view of the growing importance of Ludhiana city, it was raised to class I municipality with effect from December 15, 1949 ^[24]. The subsequent extensions of Municipal limits in 1952 ^[25] and 1962 resulted in an increase in the total area from 17.9 square km in 1952 to 42.82 square km in 1962 ^[26]. There was an upward trend in the population of the city from 1,11,639 in 1941 to 1,53,795 in 1951 and 2,44,032 in 1961 ^[27].

The city was divided into 38 constituencies out of which 3 were double member constituencies, after the delimitation process of the wards was notified after the extension of Municipal limits in 1962 ^[28]. Three seats were reserved for scheduled castes. All the 41 members were elected members. The municipal elections were held in 1964 ^[29].

In 1995, there were 70 constituencies (wards) divided into four zones. In zone one-ward no four to eight, forty nine to fifty two and sixty to sixty eight (ii) In zone two-ward no. nine

to nineteen, fifty three, fifty five to fifty nine (iii) In zone three-ward no. twenty to thirty three and fifty four, (iv) In zone forth-ward no. one to three, thirty four to forty eight, sixty eight and seventy in Ludhiana city.

The Ludhiana Municipality was brought under the already promulgated the Punjab Municipal (Executive Officers) Act, 1931 on November 3, 1965 paving the way for the appointment of a P.C.S. officer as an Executive officer from November 20, 1965 ^[30]. The Executive officer is an overall incharge of Municipal administration. He is assisted by the Secretary and the Assistant Secretaries, insofar as general administration is concerned. The general wing, the accounts branch, the tax department, the building branch and the land licensing section were engaged in housekeeping, revenue collection and regulatory activities. There are four important departments that are directly involved in service functions. There are the medical, health, veterinary and engineering departments for the promotion of health and sanitation.

In Municipal administration, the health officer was given wide powers. The minutes of the health sub-committee were permitted to be recorded by the health officer. He put up weekly reports of infectious diseases to the municipal council ^[31]. He was also empowered to keep the accounts. From 1946, Civil Surgeon Ludhiana became the member of Municipal Council. Health department dealt with city sanitation, including cleaning of streets and drains, collection and disposal of refuse and garbage, maintenance of tuberculosis clinic, maternity centers, infectious diseases hospitals, leprosy clinic and the municipal slaughter house. Under the charge of a veterinary officer, who is on deputation from the state Government, the veterinary section functioned without, of course, the responsibility for the slaughter house which is placed under medical officer of health.

In 1944, a town planner was appointed ^[32]. First Town Planning scheme was prepared in 1948, for the area known as 'Kundanpuri' ^[33]. Although in the initial stages, a few planned colonies like Urban Estates, Model Town were developed by Improvement Trust and a few industrial focal points were planned by the government. But this development was not sufficient to bear the load of population pressure and subsequently a large number of unplanned colonies came to be set up which not only resulted in the haphazard growth of the town but also lacked proper road-network, parks and open spaces, spaces for education, health and other social infrastructure. So bye-laws of buildings were made by which encroachments of streets was prohibited ^[34]. Unauthorised buildings were demolished. The bye-laws of 1922 was vigorously applied which prohibited the construction of any lane less than 12 feet wide. The same year vide Sec. 171 of the bye-laws, the owner of the houses were asked to pave the streets with side drains at their own cost. The brick paved tarred or slabbed roads and Public streets are the hallmark of the entire Ludhiana municipal limits ^[35]. Proper surface drainage system has been put in place in all the localities where streets have been declared public streets by the act of 1976-242(2). The Town Planner did not permit back to back houses in newly coming up localities. Shops were not allowed to be built in the residential localities ^[36].

In 1962, 8.6 km long stretch of a bypass on the Grand Trunk Road was laid to divert and facilitate the movement of the

traffic. Some agricultural land beyond the bye pass was also acquired by the Government to develop a Focal Point and a new industrial area. The construction of the bye-pass heralded the second phase (1963-75) of city growth.

In October 1908, Ludhiana municipal committee stated water supply ^[37]. When the city was getting power-supply in 1938, the shallow tube-wells were replaced by deep tube-wells and system of pumping and extracting the water was made through new electrical motors ^[38]. Keeping in view the growth of population in the city, 38 tube-wells were installed between 1945-1970 ^[39]. But the level of service provided by the Municipal Corporation is far from satisfactory. About 40 per cent of the city population remains uncovered by piped water supply ^[40]. In Ludhiana city a point of serious worry is the contamination of the surface water. This is related to seepage of chemical charged sullage. The city generates a large quantity of industrial waste which find its way into the Budhanala the city drains and local depressions.

The Municipal Committee successfully thought about all sort of epidemics. Public Health subcommittee with the help of health officers worked for the prevention of diseases. Municipal Committee sanctioned amount for special diet and special Medicine for the T.B patients in the city on the recommendation of Medical officer's report ^[41]. In 1955 a separate leprosy clinic was established in the city ^[42]. The figures of the B.C.G. vaccination work in Ludhiana Municipality showed satisfactory results ^[43]. Commissioner of Jalandhar Division ordered to purchase a film projector for the purpose of health and civic education to the people ^[44].

The civic status of the city was raised to that of a corporation in 1976 by the Punjab Municipal Corporation Act, 1976 (Punjab Act 42 of 1976). This followed the extension of the city limits from 42.82 to 128.3 Sq Km in 1975 ^[45], in 1979 ^[46] it was 134.67 Sq Km, in 1995 ^[47] it was 159.37 Sq Km. From the very beginning, sub-committees were formed to help the secretary to perform statutory functions, as in 1949 eight sub-committees were formed and their members were elected among themselves.

In 1976 Municipal Committee was converted into Municipal Corporation by The Punjab Corporation Act, 1976. Ludhiana municipal corporation made its maiden journey into the electoral process in year 1992 and Chardhary Satparkash graced the mayoral chair of Municipal Corporation of Ludhiana for the first time. The Chair of Senior Deputy Mayor was bestowed upon S. Surjit Singh Ahluwalia. The house had 50 members ^[48] in it. The enhancement of territorial area and population paved the way for increased strength of the house which increased to 75 with six MLA members. The corporation shall meet at least once in every month for the transaction of routine business. The Mayor or his Senior Deputy Mayor or in the absence of both, the meeting will be chaired by the Deputy Mayor. The first meeting of the corporation after the general elections shall be held at the earliest after the declaration of the municipal elections under sections 17 and a Division Commissioner ^[49] shall convene the meeting. To complete the quorum for the meeting at least one third of the total number of members must be present on the day of meeting. The Government by notification had constituted different services in corporation namely : Punjab service of corporation Engineers and sectional officers;

Corporation Health Officers; Corporation Secretaries; Corporation Accounts officers and Accountants; Corporation service as the Government may decide.

The Punjab Corporation Act 1976 had empowered the Corporation to impose 'Development Tax on the increase in urban land values, caused by the execution of any development or improvement. The Act had also provided that the Government will share the proceeds under the following heads with the corporation (i) The Indian Stamp Act, 1899, (ii) Punjab Motor Vehicles Taxation Act, 1924, (iii) The Punjab Electricity Duty Act, 1958 (iv) The Punjab Entertainment Duty Act, 1955 (v) The Punjab Entertainment Tax Act, 1954. The Corporation made expenditure on development, contingency and establishment. The actual expenditure was not according to the target fixed by members of the Integrated City Development Programme Report. The Municipal engineers spent maximum amount on development work during 1976-77. The Corporation was almost reaching a stage of bankruptcy. The corporation as per statement of the year had a liability of Rs. 15 crores. The corporation took loan from the Improvement Trust, in fact, it was a loan given by Government of India for acquisition and development of land in Ludhiana for meeting the demands of the people for residential and commercial sites. It became difficult for the Trust to make development project and make repayment of the loan to the central Government.

All these facts show that so far as financial management of the corporation is concerned, there is much room for its improvement. Dr. Tripathi wrote, "In order to stabilize the basis of Indian democracy, it is necessary that the finances of the municipal bodies be placed on an even keel" ^[50].

The Punjab Municipal corporation Act 1976 has vested powers in the Mayor, members of the council and the Commissioner. No elections have been held till 1992 and since then the commissioner has been acting as three-in-one ^[51]. The commissioner has been given wide powers. Though he is accountable to the state Government but there is no effective mechanism for the exercise of this control. The corporation has not been inspected by any authority since its creation.

The commissioner has been assigned a major role in the preparation of the budget. But neither he nor any of his subordinates are experts in budget making. He simply incorporates the recommendations of the various heads in the corporation budget. He has no expert to assist him in the budget preparation. So he depends on his officials who have no knowledge of the modern principles of budget-making of organizations, involving the income and expenditure of several crores of rupees. The Commissioner has a very important role in the maintenance of proper accounts, to assist the auditors in checking the accounts of the corporation. He has a vital role to play as a material manager of the corporation ^[52].

Octroi was the main source of income of the Municipal committee. Income from Octroi was increased because Ludhiana was an industrial city. House tax was another source of income, levied on the rich and the poor alike, both within the city and the outside on land. Another source of income were the tax on animals and vehicles, tax on professionals and traders, tolls on roads and ferries, water rates, lighting rates,

other taxes-licenses, rent on lands and shops, fee from Educational institutions, fines, grants from Government, grants from local funds and miscellaneous.

Before independence, there was no fixed percentage of the budget. The allotment of funds was done according to the changing needs. After independence a certain degree of fixity was introduced in the allotment of funds. Reshuffling was also done in the different heads according to the priority- General administration, public safety, lighting, public health, water supply, hospitals, vaccinations, sanitation, roads, buildings and public instructions.

The Financial position of the Municipal Committee/Municipal Corporation remained very satisfactory throughout the period of study. The income remained in excess of the expenditure except for a few years when either the income fell for certain reasons or the committee had to incur heavy expenditure on major projects. Every new financial year started with a plus opening balance.

Ludhiana Municipal Committee and Municipal Corporation has succeeded in implementing some schemes relating to improvement of roads and crossings. The low lying unpaved lanes were turned into pucca streets with side drains, underground sewerage system, sixty percent of city covered under water supply, medical facilities are provided through hospital and dispensaries and improvement of sanitation through augmentation of transport fleet, shifting of dairies, but much remains to be done. The technical and Professional education facilities have steadily expanded and in consequence medical, engineering, agricultural research, and industrial and other technical education and training facilities are available to a wide region, well beyond the city limits.

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9. The Montage chelmsford Report, Calcutta, 1918, p. 1.
10. Khanna RL, Municipal Government and Administration in India, p. 22; S/C Report, V, p. 1065-66. The changes were made vide the Amendment Acts 1923 and 1933 on the Punjab Act III of 1911.
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