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Politics and Bureaucracy in Urban Governance: The Indian Experience

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4 Politics and Bureaucracy in Urban Governance: The Indian Experience

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I INTRODUCTION

Urban governance connotes the process of governing the urban areas. It includes the functioning of the urban government (that is interplay of elective and bureaucratic elements in it) as well as the relation between it and the civil society. The actors in the urban economy and the citizens as consumers of civic services interact with local politicians and administrators managing the urban government, which is legally a creature of the higher-level state government. The nature of urban governance, therefore, is to be understood in terms of not only of the municipal management pattern but also of urban politics and bureaucracy vis-a-vis the civil society, the state-level political leadership, para-statal agencies engaged in planning and development of urban areas and, finally, of the over-all political culture.

II MUNICIPAL MANAGEMENT PATTERN

At present there are two basic types of urban governments in India—municipality in small towns and cities, and municipal corporations in big cities.[1] The municipality has a directly elected council (board) which elects its chairman and forms the standing committees. The chairman enjoys full powers of decision-making and administration in consultation with the council and its committees. This is interpreted as the essence of local democracy. There are basically three management patterns in administering the municipalities. In some states the locally recruited bureaucracy assists the council and the chairman in the governance process, and functions under the total control and supervision of the chairman and the council. Under the second pattern, the chairman and council are assisted by a state cadre of municipal bureaucracy recruited and managed by the state. In a few other states, the top layer of the municipal bureaucracy is drawn from the national and state-level bureaucracy on a tenure basis (Mukhopadhyay 1985).[2] Under the unified or integrated municipal

personnel system, the executive officer comes from 'outside', virtually as an agent of the state government, and exhibits an attitude which is more state-oriented than municipality-oriented. He is likely to imagine himself as an officer of the state with the job of setting right the 'delinquent' councillors and the messy municipal administration. In governing a municipality town there is no division of powers between the deliberative and executive wings, and the authority and responsibility for taking and enforcing decisions in urban governance is diffused among the council, the chairman and the administrative staff. In practice, the chairman is the executive head and he supervises and controls the entire municipal administration.

In big cities, the management pattern reveals a sharing of governing power between the elected corporation, standing committees and municipal Commissioner who legally is one of the municipal authorities. The Commissioner enjoys all the executive powers and is not under the control of the mayor whose role is largely ornamental or of the corporation whose main job is deliberation. The elected councillors deliberate on policies and approve the budget but the Commissioner exercises executive powers. There is an intrinsic conflict between the Commissioner, who is usually an Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer appointed by the state government, and the corporation which is an elected body. The municipal administration generally suffers from poor quality staff; it is very susceptible to local pressures; and has antiquated systems of internal management. The staff is poor because of low prestige, poor service benefits and usually poor working conditions. Management is difficult because the staff is appointed by the elected municipal authority giving little control to the executive. The elaborate separation of powers between the deliberative and executive wings reflects a bias against the role of politics in urban governance, and is only a compromise between the claims of democratic participation and the requirements of administrative efficiency. It has, neither in theory nor in practice, been a solution to the problem of democratic management of urban development.

Recently the mayor-in-council (M-I-C) form of the urban management has been adopted in West Bengal's municipal corporations (Mukhopadhyay 1985).[3] The full powers of governance, both policy-making and executive, are vested in the M-I-C while the municipal Commissioner heads the administrative wing and functions under the general control and supervision of the mayor who is the chief executive. This form of management empowers the mayor to choose the other

members of the M-I-C and distribute responsibilities among them. The M-I-C has been given three major roles to perform as the: (i) political executive, (ii) decision-making authority, and (iii) participant in management function. This system restores the much-needed nexus between urban management and politics and has been advocated on the grounds of better political accountability of the decision-makers in urban governance. The elected representatives of the people have been designated as the sole municipal authority for urban governance. Under this system there is a unified executive, and clear lines of responsibility, control and accountability have been established. The municipal commissioner, deputed by the state government, no longer enjoys the final authority in municipal administration but functions as a co-ordinating officer. The administrative heads of functional departments theoretically function under the dual control of their respective member of the M-I-C and of the municipal commissioner. But, in practice, they care more for the control exercised by the member of the M-I-C than for the commissioner's control. When there is any inter-departmental conflict in decision-making, the matter is settled for all practical purposes by the mayor, with or without the advice of the commissioner. The supremacy of the elected elements over the municipal bureaucracy in decision-making has been the hallmark of the management practices under the M-I-C system.

The M-I-C system of urban government has been functioning in Calcutta and Howrah since 1984, and the same pattern of management structure was introduced in 1994 in the newly-created municipal corporations of Asansol and Siliguri in West Bengal. It cannot, however, be said to have been fully tested, because the same combination of political forces called the Left Front has been in power since 1977–78 at both the state level and the city level. Hence there has been, till date, no occasion of confrontation between the state government and the municipal corporation. It remains anybody's guess how the state-city relation will take shape once two different political parties come to control the state government and the city government. Under the M-I-C system the traditional power of the state government to dissolve or supersede the municipal corporation has been retained. It would ultimately depend on the existing political culture—accommodative or confrontative—to give this democratic experiment a fair trial. The values, attitudes and habits of functioning of the political parties would significantly influence the nature of state-city relations in urban governance.

The overwhelming political control over urban planning and development exercised by the state-level leadership has not allowed the civil society's specific relation with the new pattern of urban management to be tested. In India, not much research has been done to discover the nature of relation between the commercial world as the main spokesman of the civil society and the urban government. But it is fairly apparent that the civil society in urban areas primarily looks to the state-level administration for protecting its interests, and seeks to exercise influence on the process of urban governance through the state-level political leadership and the para-statal agencies like urban development authorities.

III MANAGEMENT UNDER SUPERSESSION

Both the municipal council and the municipal corporation are liable to be superseded by the State government on grounds of mismanagement. Municipal supersession is essentially political in nature. Its use is inextricably connected with the evolving political culture, that is, the nature of political power structure at the city level and its vertical and horizontal linkages. This power has so far been very liberally used by almost all state governments, mostly on party political considerations and sometimes on technical-administrative considerations. When a municipal council is superseded, the powers of the council are vested in an administrator, usually the sub-divisional officer, appointed either on a full-time or part-time capacity by the state government. In a superseded municipal corporation, the administrator is usually a senior IAS officer who just waits for his next posting and hardly takes his job seriously whatever he does, he does at the bidding of the state government (Mukhopadhyay 1986; Bhattacharya 1982).[4]

Decision Making

In terms of the science of administration, decision-making in urban governance is both 'programmed' and 'non-programmed'. The functions, such as calling tenders and selecting contracts, billing for property taxes, issuing trade licences, arranging and maintaining municipal services, are, for the most part, 'programmed' and are under the jurisdiction of the municipal bureaucracy. Political leadership is given jurisdiction over 'non-programmed' decisions that relate to making options and assessing alternative courses of action in a

multichoice situation, and evaluating the potential outcomes by anticipating possible future consequences of action. Urban planning and development is an example of 'non-programmed' decision-making. Decisions in this respect are those concerned with levying taxes, sanctioning of building plans, approval of site development projects and new capital investment in municipal services. These are matters in which State government also has a say, directly or indirectly. The legislative scheme of urban governance is such that the state government can intervene in extraordinary situations and in crises of management can even pre-empt the decisional jurisdiction of the municipal government.

There is no reason to think that the municipal bureaucracy is a homogeneous power group. Sometimes there are competitions and conflicts within the bureaucracy itself. Municipal administration needs the services of both generalist and specialist administrators. The departments of conservancy, water supply, medical and public health, building, lighting, accounts etc. are headed by technical people. These specialist administrators usually harbour professional jealousy, and resent the bossism of the chief executive officer, his deputy superintendent and other generalist officers. The specialist administrators question the competence of generalist administrators while the latter complain against the former's narrow technical perception of civic problems and their larger implications for urban governance. It is not an uncommon experience in India's urban governance to find these two sets of officers suffering from their respective professional arrogance and also vying with each other to curry favour with the councillors and political executives. Sometimes technocrats throw a spanner in the works to create administrative difficulties for generalist executive officers and vice versa.

IV POLITICS AND BUREAUCRACY IN MUNICIPALITIES

So far as governance of smaller urban areas is concerned, the role of the bureaucracy has been minimal in the separate personnel system but important in unified and integrated personnel systems. In the separate personnel system it is easy for the elected councillors and the chairman to influence the quality of governance (Mukhopadhyay 1986).[5] This explains the corruption in urban governance in many small and medium towns. The chairman has the power as well as inclination to bypass the municipal bureaucracy, if and when found necessary. In big

cities also, this is possible. The councillors' interference with the work of the municipal executive was held to be at the root of Calcutta's manifold civic malaise such as inefficiency in service delivery, mismanagement and financial bankruptcy (Government of West Bengal 1949).[6] This kind of perspective led the rural-urban relationship committee to argue that politics and political parties weaken municipal administration. But the committee betrayed a pathetic lack of understanding of politics and the role of political parties in local government as it ignored vital questions regarding the sources and functions of municipal politics. The assumption of a political approach to urban governance had also long been a stumbling block to creative thinking about municipal politics and urban governance (Srinivasan Sharma 1965; Government of India 1966).[7] It can be argued that all the vices laid at the door of local government can be discovered also in the upper levels of government (Barfiwala 1954).[8]

In the unified and integrated systems there very often are tensions between elected leadership and bureaucracy leading to delays and deadlocks in urban governance (Mukhopadhyay 1985).[9] Councillors come in close contact with municipal bureaucrats mainly at the committee and ward levels. It is the councillors' anxiety to serve their constituencies which mostly brings them in conflict with the officials who belong to the state cadre and are eager to check the councillors' enthusiasm, ostensibly to uphold the norms of municipal administration. The bureaucrats bring in their own norms and sense of propriety which do not tally with those of councillors. Sometimes the bureaucrats challenge the councillors at the overt or covert instance of higher-level bureaucracy or state level politicians . On the other hand, there are instances when municipal administrators have to rely on the councillors for local data and information and political intervention in administrative situations. Councillors informally supervise municipal activities at the ward level and act as useful liaison points between the municipal bureaucracy and the citizens. It is the party political complexion of the state government and of the municipal council which determines the nature of tension or collaboration existing between politicians and administrators (Rosenthal 1970; Jones 1974).[10] Whenever the political leadership in municipal government is divided and weak, the municipal bureaucracy asserts its powers and also exercises influence by playing one group of councillors against another. In such situations the bureaucracy tries to function in an 'autonomous' manner, thereby either protecting citizens' interests against corrupt councillors

or jeopardizing democracy in urban governance.[11] The worst thing happens when the elective and the bureaucratic elements manage to come to some sort of an understanding on the principle of 'live and let live' and share the loaves and fishes of office. An unholy alliance between politics and bureaucracy destroys both the efficiency and participative value of local government (Sharpe 1970).[12]

V POLITICS AND BUREAUCRACY IN MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS

The rationale behind the separation of powers between the executive wing and the deliberative wing of Indian city government is to eliminate the authority and interference of councillors in administrative matters (Vajpayi 1966; D.P. Singh 1968).[13] There are both overlapping and segmented jurisdictions allotted to the corporation-committees mayor on the one hand and to the municipal commissioner on the other, in the administration of big cities. The functions of urban governance are of such a nature as to admit of overlapping powers and jurisdictions of the deliberative and executive wings of big city government (Ashraf 1977).[14] The commissioner has to act as the eyes and ears of the state government and he is tempted to confront the elected local leadership, the experience of governing Calcutta in the fifties and sixties is an eloquent testimony to this. The problem of deliberative-executive relationship in municipal government, especially in corporation cities, has been found to be a major area of tension (Rosenthal 1976).[15]

Until recently, the overall Indian experience has been that regular election of municipal bodies is a rare phenomenon, West Bengal in the last decade being an exception. The situation is expected to change in favour of regular election under the seventy–fourth amendment to the Constitution of India. When a municipal body remains under supersession, the municipal bureaucracy exercises full power of urban governance. Experience suggests that this state of affairs nowhere leads to better governance in any sense of the term. Collection of taxes, maintenance of civic services, enforcing discipline and minimizing corruption are not necessarily carried out more efficiently, as illustrated by the experience of Calcutta corporation under supersession from 1972 to 1978. Rather, a semblance of administrative discipline is restored and civic services better performed only when there is an elected popular leadership which remains accountable to their political masters at regular intervals.

The mayor-in-council pattern of urban management, as a viable and acceptable mode of urban governance, seems to be the trend of the future. More than once, the all-India mayors' conference has already voiced its unanimous demand for the introduction of the M-I-C model throughout India. The elected and accountable leadership in a competitive democratic political set-up would be alert and responsible in dealing with citizens' needs, and courageous and responsive in dealing with the bureaucracy which would be functioning under its general control and supervision. In this connection three crucial questions may be asked: (a) Does democratic participation increase administrative efficiency? (b) Are its consequences conducive or obstructive to administrative efficiency? and (c) Are the role and behaviour of elected representatives conducive to good governance?

The organization and management pattern of urban government and the nature of urban politics may be able to provide an answer to these questions. The requirements of good governance are (i) efficient fulfilment of public goals, and (ii) ensuring public accountability. These two objects can be realized only through the rule of elected politicians controlled by party discipline. The M-I-C form of urban government satisfies these criteria. 'Efficiency' is a complex concept and it is not the only value in administration (Self 1977).[16] Liberal political philosophy places its faith in the primacy of political participation over administrative efficiency in local government. Its classic example is found in Lord Ripon's Resolution (1882) which advocated the establishment of local self-government institutions by providing for the right of ratepayers to choose their representatives on municipal councils and reducing the official element in local bodies. It is remarkable in its clear articulation of the liberal faith in the primacy of political participation over administrative efficiency in local administration. The resolution declared 'It is not primarily with a view to improvement in administration that this measure is put forward and supported. It is chiefly desirable as an instrument of political and popular education (Ripon Resolution 1930).[17]

The essence of the point still remains relevant. The elected elements in urban government not only act as an instrument of political and popular education but ensure public accountability which is as much necessary as efficient fulfilment of public goals.

VI CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Experience gained so far suggests that fuller democracy and citizen participation can be achieved through urban community development projects. The improvement of the quality of life in traditional areas of a city can be accomplished most effectively with the full and equal participation of the people. Through a genuine partnership planning and executing the improvements, there seems to be a greater possibility of minimizing the disruptive and traumatic effects of change and the unanticipated consequences of planned social change (Cousins 1981, Mukhopadhyay 1993).[18] Urban life in India still retains elements of rural orientation as well as social mobilization. The emergence of new forms of voluntary associations organized by political parties and trade unions represent new social forces in urban life. The decline of some old social forces facilitates the impact of mass politics on urban governance. These developments cause discontinuities in its power structure. In the emerging political culture of India in the wake of policies of liberalization and globalization, the non-government organizations (NGO) and community-based organizations (CBO) are likely to play a greater role in urban management in future. But the success or failure of the new pattern of interaction between politics and the bureaucracy depends upon the overall political culture prevailing at a particular time and place. While the structure of a municipal corporation *formally* separates administrative and political actors, municipal councillors manage to influence the character of administrative behaviour (Church 1976).[19] They bring to bear a set of political and personnel resources in order to force administrators to approach problems of decision-making in a manner that usually individualizes decision-making for particular groups or individuals—what is sometimes seen as humanizing decision-making. As Rosenthal has argued, though administrators tend to view such individualization of administration as inappropriate, this is a major societal function performed by municipal politicians in an otherwise highly bureaucratized situation (Rosenthal 1976).[20]

VII COUNCILLOR-BUREAUCRAT INTERFACE

Essentially a prismatic society by nature, India is experiencing a serious lack of balance between the rate of political development and bureaucratic growth. Bureaucracy at the local level has been expanding in size and given more responsibilities at the cost of its efficiency and

especially its ability to stand up to the pressure of self-seeking politicians. Municipal administration is exposed to the direct gaze of councillors at several points. It is useless to talk about deliberative-executive separation. Ali Ashraf's inquiry into the patterns of dominance, interests and values of municipal leaders in Calcutta corporation between 1924 and 1964 and the mechanisms of their control over the municipal bureaucracy reveals interesting information on politics and bureaucracy in urban governance. He has shown how the mechanism of control is determined by the social and political affiliations of municipal leaders. The councillors and standing committee members try to influence the bureaucracy in respect of the priorities of development expenditures, award of contracts, assessment and valuation of property and promotion and disciplining of employees. The mechanisms of influence range from personal request to open threats of political revenge (Ashraf 1966).[21]

The general experience has been that there has been a sort of reversal of roles of local politicians and bureaucrats in urban governance in that local politicians are seen to be interested more in such matters as tenders and contracts, sanctioning of building plans, recruitment, transfer and posting of staff and employees and disciplinary control over them, sale of municipal lands and properties and such other functions that traditionally belong to the sphere of the bureaucracy. On the other hand, the bureaucracy plays a crucial role in policy matters affecting urban governance and also in the planning and development of urban areas. Sometimes a strange duality in the councillors' role is noticed. Ali Ashraf found that when it came to examining civic projects in detail, the councillor-members of the committees and the councillors of the corporation had hardly any time to go through the intricacies of a matter; by contrast, councillors showed considerable activity and vigilance where their particular constituency or other interests were specifically affected. This is nothing very surprising. City councillors in western cities spend some of their time in meeting citizens to hear mundane grievances but that does not take all their time since they are not involved in routine administration (Rees & Smith 1964; Heclo 1969).[22] But research evidence suggests something peculiar in Indian experience. Roderick Church finds that virtually the entire job of the Indian city councillor revolves around administration.

> The councillors usually show little concern with policy, general issues or matters that do not concern the immediate allocation of municipal services. Instead they are output-oriented and concerned with administrative demands and the outcomes of administrative decisions (Church 1976).[23]

Rosenthal's study of Agra and Poona corroborates Church's viewpoint. He finds that:

> Much of the corporators' actual work involves efforts on their part to particularise bureaucratic performances. Pressures may be exerted on local administration by local groups, through friendly official ministers in the state government through party contacts, but the most institutionalised form of making demands on the municipal administration is through the corporators. Indeed, many corporators see such activities as the primary aspect of their role (Rosenthal 1970).[24]

Philip Oldenburg's study of the different participants in the city government of Delhi at the ward (neighbourhood), zonal and headquarters level has revealed that the councillor is, effectively speaking, the municipal administration at the ward level. His *political* role is all-pervasive. The deliberations at the corporation and committee meetings are primarily concerned with deliberation, legislation and policy-making. But the councillors actually discuss may things, including 'executive' matters. As a linkman between the citizen and the administrator, the councillor interprets the problems of his constituents and asks the officer to attend to those. The officers also find this role of the councillor quite helpful in bringing to their notice information about the people and the problems of the locality. At the zonal-level meetings the councillors and the officers come in close contact and work in consultation with one another. At the ward level the councillor keeps a watch on what the officers do and virtually plays the role of member in the administrative process. As Oldenburg notes, the basis of the councillor's power over the officers is therefold. The councillor's expertise, his influence over transfer and promotion of officers and his ability to 'expose' or 'slander' the officer (Oldenburg 1978).[25]

Church has given several reasons for the Indian city councillor being so involved in administration rather than in policy matters:

> First, financial and legal restrictions imposed by state governments severely limit the ability of municipalities to make important decisions about priorities in public policy. This means the councillor is not especially likely to be involved in policy-matters or to consider policy-making an important part of his role. Second, .. The problem is acute scarcity and the fact is that many perfectly legitimate demands must go unfulfilled. In this situation the councillor becomes an additional lever of influence for citizens with demands, and he necessarily becomes involved in administering scarcity. Third .. General inefficiency and corruption in municipal administration, together with interference in administration by other councillors, means the councillor cannot rely on rules and policy guidelines to ensure that his constituents receive their share of civic services. There is usually a large gap between policy and what eventually emerges at the administrative level. For a councillor to content himself with policy matters and to leave administration to others would be the height of folly (Church 1976).[26]

Councillors exercise influence over administrators in a number of ways and they realize that most administrators play a political game. Apart from personal friendship, councillors use coercive means such as political backing, agitation and blackmail to get their demands attended to by the officers.

If the functional roles the municipal councillors *actually* play is taken into account, they are generally found to be playing four types of roles: (i) ombudsmanic role, (ii) managerial role, (iii) legislative role and (iv) political role. The councillor very often acts as the grievance-redressal man for his constituents; this role is most conspicuous at the ward level. Second, the councillor participates in decision-making at the committee level. Third, at the council meeting the councillor takes an overall city-wide view of the major problems. Fourth, as essentially a political animal involved in conflict situations, the councillor takes a *partisan* view of governance, which the administrators resent as undue interference in administration (Bhattacharaya 1982).[27]

Bureaucrats, in practice, play multiple roles in administration. They pre-eminently function as adviser to their political executives. The politicians have many sources of advice and bureaucracy is an important source. Bureaucrats monitor the state of affairs within their departments and serve as an important antenna to feed the political executive. They are in contact with not only the persons and problems within the municipal government but generally keep a close watch on

the reactions of the civil society generated outside it. They know the rules and regulations and also interpret them as and when necessary. Second, they function as diplomats in the local community. They have to face the pressures of the civil society, talk with the people who matter within and outside the municipal government, receive memoranda and petitions and negotiate over the demands in accordance with the broader policy frame determined by the political executive. Where the municipal commissioner is vested with full executive powers, he plays this role almost independently and indicates through his 'diplomatic' moves how much of the demands upon the municipal government can be accepted and how much of the pressures can be accommodated. In small and medium municipalities also, the bureaucracy is seen to be playing this role quite successfully within the parameters set by local politics. Third, a successful bureaucrat also has to play the role of a scholar and a barrister. He collects and collates data about the problems and policies which he handles and prepares the brief for the mayor or the member of the M-I-C or, in a municipality, for the chairman and the council. If the issue is not politically sensitive, the political design-makers prefer to be guided by the notes and briefs prepared by the bureaucracy. The task of urban governance, especially in big cities, is so complex as to necessitate the participation of outside groups in such municipal activities as poverty alleviation programmes with socio-economic contents. By education and training, bureaucrats are in a better position than politicians to tackle the NGOs and CBOs working in urban governance, especially in regard to legal and financial problems. When the big cities are involved in the globalization policies of the government, the municipal bureaucracy has to function as a serious partner of the political executive in negotiating and implementing urban development programmes.

VIII URBAN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITIES

In India, the management of urban infrastructure has not remained under the exclusive jurisdiction of the municipal government. The policy of integrated urban development programme has produced, since the seventies, a large number of urban development authorities in big, medium and growing towns, and metropolitan development authorities in metro cities. These development authorities have been set up with interdisciplinary expertise for planning, co-ordinating, implementing (where necessary), funding and supervising urban development

programmes. An understanding of the urban development authorities would help illuminate the nature of an important part of urban governance in India and facilitate the answer to the question of 'who gets what, when and how' in major Indian cities.

These development authorities were justified as ideal administrative instruments to carry out urban extension schemes, leaving the core city in the charge of the municipal government. Urban development was sought to be kept separate from urban politics, mainly following the colonial tradition of improvement thrusts. These development bodies are nominated by the state government, bureaucratic in composition and unaccountable to the local people. But as planning and development process becomes complicated, and more and more citizen participation is demanded, these bodies prove to be politically counterproductive. These bodies play an important part in urban governance but they are far away from people's participation and response. In their working they are insulated from local politics but are heavily influenced by state-level politics. They often function in an authoritarian manner in making decisions on capital budgeting *vis-a-vis* the local civic bodies, and they release funds on condition of scheme-vetting and monitoring by them. Experience suggests that these bodies do not augment the management capacity necessary for urban governance. While giving constitutional recognition to the urban local government, the seventy–fourth Constitutional Amendment remains silent on the role of the development authorities vis-a-vis an elected municipal government. It is relevant to note here that, the Development Authority must receive inter-institutional legitimacy and acceptance in the governmental framework by which alone it can achieve the credibility of commanding and orchestrating the total urban programme (Biswas 1982.)[28]

The existing development authorities, however, fail to pass through this acid test since bureaucracy dominates in this aspect of urban governance.

IX MAYOR-IN-COUNCIL AT WORK

The M-I-C system, working for the last 10 years in Calcutta and Howrah, seems to have been accepted as a better management pattern by both the politicians and bureaucrats. The reasons for the politicians positively preferring the new system are mainly two. First, under the previous system the councillors had to approach the commissioner and

request or cajole him to undertake development work in their constituencies and to attend to citizens' complaints. As the supreme commander of municipal administration, the commissioner used to exercise considerable discretion in accommodating or rejecting the councillors' requests and demands. Under these circumstances two possible consequences could result: either the councillors would develop some sort of understanding with the commissioner, sometimes leading to administrative malpractices or they would engage in constant confrontation with the commissioner, most often leading to administrative tensions and sometimes creating deadlocks. The commissioner, conscious of his powers and prerogatives and serving on deputation, very often did not care to redress the councillors' grievances, nor did he have much stake in his job as the head of the municipal executive. If the commissioner happened to enjoy the confidence and backing of the state-level political leadership, he could easily ignore or resist the demands of the elected councillors and also of the mayor. The powers and style of functioning of the commissioner typified the politically irresponsible municipal administration. The M-I-C system has done away with this institutional anachronism and has allowed the elected councillors to play their representative role more meaningfully.

Recent inquiries suggest that the councillors are happy in having a larger political role in as much as they have their own elected members of the M-I-C as the political heads in charge of functional departments of municipal government. Their approaches to the political executive are now political and they receive much more attention from departmental heads than before. As a result, not only is the councillors' self importance gratified, but, more importantly, citizens' complaints are attended to much more quickly and satisfactorily than before. The high-handedness of the municipal bureaucracy has been significantly reduced.

On the other hand, most of the municipal bureaucrats, especially the middle-level officers, also find the M-I-C system definitely better than the previous system. Now the technocrats and administrators can have access to their political executive much more easily than they could to the commissioner under the old system. Experience shows that the municipal officers are now in a better administrative position to understand the thinking of the political executive, and they find wider scope and more time to discuss both contents and implementation of policies. For the middle-level officers, who

constitute the real backbone of administration in a municipal corporation, it has been a more satisfying professional experience to discuss points with a responsible political figure engaged whole-time in municipal management, and also having local political roots, than to receive orders from the commissioner who belongs to the superior civil service and functions under the remote control of the State government. This especially has been the experience of technocrats in the municipal administration. The decision-making process under the M-I-C system has been more open and less suffocating in so far as the specialist administrators feel more easy and less inhibited working under a political boss than under an IAS boss. The professional tension and rivalry between the generalists and specialists are remarkably less now than before.

Again, decision-making is quicker as the officers can take decisions after consulting their member of the M-I-C. Under the previous system, there used to be procedural delays as files had to be submitted to the Commissioner who then gave his ruling on them. Moreover, as local political leaders, the members of the M-I-C themselves take an interest in nursing their constituencies and meeting citizens' demands. Very often they, on their own, ask their departmental officers to take prompt decisions to attend to citizens' complaints. The people are thus better served under the M-I-C system of urban management.[29]

X URBAN POLITICS

De-bureaucratization' as a politico-administrative process in urban governance appears to be more a chimera than a reality. The traditional 'plural' society consisting of castes, linguistic groups, ethnic and religious communities is undergoing rapid transformation under the impact of India's urbanization process and the interplay of party politics. But these processes have not led to full social mobilization of urban dwellers in Indian cities. Ethnic, linguistic and occupational identities create separate foci of urban politics which the municipal bureaucracy is constrained to take into account in its encounter with the municipal leadership. Different models of urban politics such as 'patronage politics', 'accommodation politics' and 'confrontational politics' are seen to prevail in different contexts depending on the overall nature of state politics and political culture (Rosenthal 1976).[30] In most cases there have been frequent clashes, conflicts and misunderstanding between the two elements. Instead of trying to develop a culture of co-operation , each element has sought to rule over

the other, leading to the steady growth of a culture of mutual suspicion and studied avoidance. Doniad Rosenthal's study of administrative politics in Poona and Agra clearly appreciates the close relationship between politics and administration. He maintains that where the state-level political leadership is effective in its own sphere (as in Maharashtra), the quality of municipal administration has a respectable reputation. This is in contrast with the situation in Uttar Pradesh where the political leadership is deeply divided and apparently makes use of the bureaucracy to advance factional interests, rather than meet the administrative commitments to the public (Rosenthal 1978).[31] The politics-bureaucracy interaction in Indore municipal corporation has been studied by Rodney Jones who has found that municipal politics as such is no autonomous political phenomenon and is essentially linked with the state-level political process (Jones 1974).[32] Therefore the point is, that understanding the processes of urban governance needs the study of both state and city politics.

XI CONCLUSION

Good governance of urban areas is frustrated by a variety of factors, of which politics-bureaucracy interaction is a significant one. The roots of conflicts between politics and bureaucracy in India's urban governance, if adequately researched, would illuminate the ramifications in it of politics and the role of local elites and the bureaucracy, their values and orientations, their interests and their mechanisms of control over urban governance.

'Governance' is basically the process of the state authority exercising coercive power and civil society, encompassing the private sector economy and groups and individuals, pursuing their economic goals. In the context of increasing liberalization and globalization the civil society in India is sure to assert itself, giving a new twist to urban governance. Democratic values are likely to gain in strength. More accountability and greater transparency in decision-making would require open government and people's participation in governing India's urban areas. The seventy–fourth Amendment to the Constitution has made a small beginning by recognizing the role of municipal governments in the process of planning and development of urban areas. The interplay of politics and bureaucracy, conducted with diverse nuances in different contexts, are crucial in determining the nature and style of urban governance which, in its turn, largely depends on the nature and essence of the overall political culture of a society.

End Notes

1. The other two traditional forms of urban government, namely, 'notified area authority' and 'town committee' have gone out of existence with effect from 1st June 1994 under the Nagarpalika Act 1992 (Constitution Seventy-fourth Amendment Act). This act also provides for a third variety called nagar panchayat for small towns in a phase of transition from a rural area to an urban area.

2. For a detailed discussion of these three varieties, see Asok Mukhopadhyay, *Municipal Personnel Administration*, New Delhi: Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1985, Ch. 2.

3. For detailed discussions, see Nagarlok (New Delhi), Special Issue on Mayor-in-council, October–December 1981; also Asok Mukhopadhyay, *Municipal Personnel Administration*, New Delhi: Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1985, pp. 9–26.

4. For a discussion on the role of municipal Chairman, see Asok Mukhopadhyay, *Municipal Management and Electoral Perception*, Calcutta: World Press, 1986, Ch.2; also Mohit Bhattacharya, Role of Municipal Councillor in Urban Development, *Nagarlok*, July–September 1982.

5. Asok Mukhopadhyay, *Municipal Management and Electoral Perception*, Calcutta: World Press, 1986, Ch. 2.

6. Government of West Bengal (LSG Dept), *Report of the Calcutta Corporation Investigation Commission*, Calcutta, 1949.

7. Government of India, *Report of the Rural-Urban Relationship Committee*, New Delhi, 1966; also R. Srinivasan and B.A.V. Sharma, 'Politics in Urban India: A study of four Corporations', in S.P. Aiyer and R.Srinivasan (eds.), *Studies in Indian Democracy*, Bombay, 1965.

8. C.D. Barfiwala's note of dissent in *Report of the Committee on the Relationship between State Governments and Local Bodies*, Government of India, New Delhi, 1954.

9. Asok Mukhopadhyay, *Municipal Personnel Administration*, Ch. 5.

10. R.Jones, *Urban Politics in India: Area, Power and Policy in a Penetrated System*. Univ of California Press, 1974; also D.B Rosenthal, *The Limited Elite: Politics and Government in Two Indian Cities*, Univ of Chicago Press, 1970.

11. Karl Marx theoretically visualised such a role of bureaucracy in special political situations in his *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.

12. For a discussion of these values, see L.J. Sharpe, 'Theories and Values of Local Government', *Political Studies* (Oxford), June 1970.

13. R.B. Das and D.P Singh (eds.), *Deliberative and Executive Wings in Local Government*, Institute of Public Administration, Lucknow University, 1968; also D.K. Vajpeyi, Municipal Corporations in Uttar Pradesh: Elected Representatives and Executive Officers', *Journal of Administration Overseas*. October 1966.

14. Ali Ashraf, *Government and Politics of Big Cities: An Indian Case Study*, 1977, Ch.5.

15. D.B. Rosenthal, *The Limited Elite*; also Philip Oldenburg, *Big City Government in India: Councillors, Administrators and Citizens in Delhi*, New Delhi: Manohar Publication, 1978; and Ali Ashraf, op. cit.

16. Peter Self. *Administrative Theories and Politics*, London: George Allen & Unwin. 1977. Ch.8.

17. United Kingdom. The Ripon Resolution (1882) quoted in the *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission*. 1930. Vol. 1. London.

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19. R.Church, 'Authority and Influence in Indian Municipal Politics: Administrators and Councillors in Lucknow' in D.B. Rosenthal (ed.), *The City in Indian Politics*, Thomson Press (India), 1976.

20. D.B. Rosenthal, *The City in Indian Politics*, Introduction.

21. Ali Ashraf, *The City Government of Calcutta: A Study of Inertia*, Bombay: Asia Pub., 1966, pp. 50–51.

22. A.M Rees and T.Smith, *Town Councillors*. London: The Acton Society Trust, 1964: H.Hugh Heclo, 'The Councillor's Job', *Public Administration* (London), Summer 1969.

23. R. Church. op. cit.

24. D.B. Rosenthal. *The Limited Elite*. pp. 119.

25. P. Oldenburg. op. cit.. pp.73.

26. R.Church. op. cit.. pp.174.

27. Mohit Bhattacharya. 'Role of Municipal Councillor in Urban Development'. *Nagarlok*. July–September 1982.

28. Kalyan Biswas. 'Urban Development Authorities'. *Urban India* (New Delhi). vol 2 (2). June 1982.

29. This review of the functioning of the M-I-C system is based on interviews with the councillors and administrators of Calcutta Municipal Corporation in May–June 1994.

30. D.B. Rosenthal (ed.). *The City in Indian Politics*, Introduction.

31. D.B. Rosenthal. *The Limited Elite*.

32. R. Jones. *Urban Politics in India*.