

UNIT 31 LOCAL BODIES, OFFICIALS AND TOURISM

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31.0 OBJECTIVES

When one mentions about tourism development or promotion, generally, the issues taken into account are the Government Policy, role of travel trade, infrastructural development, etc. However, in this Unit our objective is to draw your attention towards the role of local bodies and officials. After reading this Unit you will be able to:

- know about the evolution and functions of local bodies,
- recognise their importance in relation to tourism development, and
- understand why there is a need for improvement in their functions.

31.1 INTRODUCTION

Let us examine the following two situations:

- 1) A group of tourists was to spend three days at destination A:

Two days before their departure comes the news that cases of gastro-enteritis have been reported there and the water supply was affected. The municipality was being held responsible for this. The group cursed the municipal authorities. However, the of visit was changed to destination B.

The local population of destination A, besides facing health hazards also suffered economic losses because the money these tourists (along with many others who also must have either changed their itinerary or dropped the idea to visit) would have spent there was now spent at destination B.

2. At destination C everything is fine and running smoothly. Suddenly large number of tourists start arriving. This leads to:
 - traffic chaos,
 - water scarcity,
 - parking problems,
 - shortage of eatables, and
 - increase in prices, etc.

The local body and officials responsible for administering the town are blamed for this by both, the residents as well as the tourists.

There are and can be many more situations like this. Hence, it must be noted that the role of local bodies and officials is crucial in tourism planning and development.

Many developers and planners ignore this or turn their eyes away. This is disastrous in the long run.

This Unit attempts to highlight the role and functions of local bodies in tourism development, sustenance and promotion. It pinpoints their failures and weaknesses, locates the reasons for this and suggests measures for improvement.

31.2 LOCAL BODIES IN INDIA

Today, in India, we have various kinds of local bodies functional in their respective areas. For example, Municipality or Municipal Corporations, village panchayats and zila parishads, etc. These are representative bodies for the members are elected from among and by the people. Besides these there are certain other bodies also at the local or regional levels which cater to the development needs of the area. For example, Delhi Development Authority, Garhwal Vikas Mandal, etc. In the following Sub-sections we look at their evolution, functions and relationship with the state.

31.2.1 Evolution

The evolution of local self government and local bodies in India from the pre-historic times to the present has a chequered but a fascinating history. They emerged through various stages and phases with regional and local variations. For example the ruins of the Harrappan civilisation testify to an efficient and organised municipal organisation of a township. The *jataka* stories mention flourishing townships. The *Arthashastra* of Kautilya gives details of municipal as well as rural administration. The Vedic and Sangam literature have ample references to local bodies.

In pre-independence India statutory institutions were established in the area of urban local self government. Ever since the establishment of the Madras Municipal corporation there has been a proliferation of municipal bodies.

After independence the Government of India gave due weightage to the principle of local self government and a number of improvements were introduced in this regard. Today the local bodies, urban as well as rural, have a vital role in the process of development.

Before we go further into the functions of local bodies it is worth mentioning that the urban areas are administered by different types of local bodies:

- Corporations,
- Municipalities,
- Boards,
- Town Area Committees, and
- Notified Area Communities, etc.

Besides many other characteristics like density, population, occupations, amenities etc. the 1961 census, while defining a census township, included places of tourist importance which have been recently served with all civic amenities.

Here one must remember that local government is a state subject as per the Constitution of India. Hence, these bodies are created through legislation by the State Government. The functions and responsibilities are all defined in the legislation and they vary state to state.

31.2.2 Functions

As a matter of fact, functions to be performed by the municipal committees and the municipal corporations are similar in nature. The real difference lies in their powers and resources. Their jurisdiction and area of operation increases when the municipalities are raised to the status of municipal corporations. The functions of local bodies can be divided as:

- **obligatory functions, and**
- **discretionary functions.**

The former comprise:

- **supply of whole some water,**
- **construction and maintenance of water works,**
- **construction, maintenance, naming and numbering of public streets,**
- **road transport services,**
- **lighting and cleaning of public streets and other public places,**
- **removal and disposal of filth and rubbish,**
- **construction, maintenance and cleaning of drains, public latrines, toilets, etc.**
- **removal of obstructions and projections in or upon public streets and other common places,**
- **securing or removal of dangerous buildings or places,**
- **establishment and maintenance of hospitals, maternity and child welfare centres,**
- **preventive measures and checking of dangerous diseases; vaccination and inoculation,**
- **registration of births and deaths,**
- **regulation of places for the disposal of the dead and provision of places for this purpose,**
- **provision of primary education,**
- **maintenance of fire brigades,**
- **control and regulation of eating places, and**
- **publication of the Corporation's reports.**

The discretionary functions include:

- **construction and maintenance of public parks and gardens,**
- **public housing,**
- **plantation and care of trees and flowering bushes on road sides and elsewhere,**
- **destruction or detention of stray dogs and other animals causing nuisance,**
- **survey of buildings and lands,**
- **reception of VIP's,**
- **celebration of national days,**
- **registration of marriages, births and deaths,**
- **organisation and management of fairs and exhibitions,**
- **relief of destitute and disabled persons, etc.**

The obligatory functions as enumerated above can be epitomised into four main types:

- i) **public health,**
- ii) **public safety and convenience,**
- iii) **medical and public works,**
- iv) **sanitation and conservancy.**

These functions have to be necessary performed and for which budgetary provisions have to be made. Failure to perform them can empower the state government to supercede the body.

31.2.3 State-Local Bodies Relationship

Urban local bodies are institutions for administrative decentralisation created by the State Government through the Municipal Acts. The relations between the two are governed by the provisions of the Act. There are four reasons as to why state should exercise control over local bodies which are theoretically considered autonomous:

- i) Local bodies are created by the State Government.
- ii) As part of the state there is need for homogeneous development of all the areas which can be ensured by the state.
- iii) Technical skills and experience required in nation building activities are not available through the local bodies and they have to be provided by the state.
- iv) State Governments provide financial assistance to local bodies which implies control by them to ensure that the money is properly utilised.

Whatever be the rationale, the major objective of control and supervision by the State Government is to ensure efficiency in the performance of functions by the units of local Government. **But what is important is that guidance and control should not be negative. It should not restrict the initiative, discretion and assumption of responsibility by the local bodies.** On the other hand, this should strengthen their confidence and enable them to assume more responsibilities. Therefore, there is need for a high degree of cooperation and coordination between them rather than acrimony. Several criticisms are also offered in regard to the state control. There is a feeling that the strangle hold of the state governments over the local bodies is too extensive which cuts at the roots of the principle of local autonomy. Two arguments are advanced in this connection:

- i) The resource base of the local bodies is shrinking and state governments have been doing little in this regard.
- ii) The powers of suppression and dissolution are being indiscriminately used against local bodies.

For example, in 1989 out of 73 municipal corporations in the country 39 were superseded at different points of time. Some of them were superseded almost two decades ago.

This is indicative of the extent of control exercised in the states over the local bodies. Many committees have recommended measures to strengthen the resource base and also the capacity of these institutions. Acceptance and implementation of these recommendations would go a long way in ensuring cooperative relations between the state government and urban bodies.

Check Your Progress-1

1. Mention the functions of local bodies.

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2. Give arguments for and against the control of State over local bodies.

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31.3 LOCAL BODIES AND TOURISM

Initially, the role of local bodies in tourism development was not accounted for by the planners and developers. The policy formation was done at national or state level and the local bodies were ignored in this regard. The tendency has been to thrust projects from above leading to complaints later on that the local body is not cooperative or creates hurdles. Most of the local bodies also are not aware regarding their functions and responsibilities in this regard. Of late, they are becoming conscious regarding their role and rights. Their relevance in destination development and sustenance is being recognised at top levels also. In fact there is a direct correlation between tourism and local bodies.

It is acknowledged that tourist resorts, motels and other places of historical significance and natural beauty are possibly able to attract large number of tourists if the environment around the site is hygienic, well developed, neat and clean and properly maintained. For this the onus is on the local bodies. In the following paragraphs we discuss the areas that have to be managed properly by the local bodies for tourism development. However, it must be noted that these areas are to be looked upon not just because of tourism. They are in any way a part of the normal functions of the local bodies.

1. Roads, Traffic Signs and Directions

The inner roads, pavements, etc. within a city/town are developed and maintained by the concerned local body. By and large it is found that the conditions of such roads is not upto the mark. Besides, one often finds blockades and encroachments in the form of unauthorised settlements. Animals sitting in the midst of roads is a common scenario in every city. All these interrupt the smooth flow of traffic and cause jams and congestions.

Lack of display of traffic signs is another aspect which needs attention alongwith directions and indicators. These are either absent or if put up they are not repainted for years making them unclear or unreadable. Also, there is hardly any inspection done as to check that some one has not tampered with them. Imagine a situation when a tourist has to go to place "A" but he reaches place B following the directions given for place A as they had been tampered with. Providing street lights at proper points is another area to be looked upon.

2. Sanitation and Toilets

Tourists visit a destination for pleasure and enjoying a healthy environment. If the standard of civic amenities is poor, garbage disposal or waste collection is not proper, path ways are dirty, etc. the destination earns a bad image. At the same time such problems arise because of tourist influx also. Many tourists are not sanitised to keeping the environment clean. They add to the garbage problem of the local bodies. Dustbins are a rare sight. Hence, it is vital that proper steps are initiated in this regard.

Lack of toilet or dirty toilets is a major problem at destinations. The Tourism Industry has been raising this issue for a long time now without much improvement. It is high time that the local bodies take this issue seriously.

3. Water Supply

Adequate supply of water is a serious problem and the overcrowding at destinations has added to the miseries of the locals. At places this has generated tensions also between the locals and the tourists because of the water supply being directed to cater the tourists needs and regulated supply to the locals. Many private resorts have made their own arrangements but the problems remain acute. In fact among the tourists it is mainly the low budget tourist who suffers in this regard. Though portable or bottled mineral water is available at most of the destinations, water is required for other purposes also.

4. Recreation, Parks and Parking

Proper maintenance of parks, benches at proper spots, shelters from Sun and rain, plantations and adequate parking space along with recreation facilities adds to the attraction of a destinations. Providing these facilities comes very much under the purview of local bodies.

5. Pollution

It is the prime tasks of the local bodies to keep their area free from pollution of various types (In Unit 34 we have mentioned the areas in this regard).

6. Health Hazards and Medical Aid

The broad objectives of health programmes in India are to not only check and control but also take steps for doing away with the communicable disease. Besides, local bodies are to provide curative and preventive health services in their areas. Number of mosquitos and flies, dirty water accumulated in drains and pots, unhygienic ways of preparation of eatables, unhealthy arrangements for marketing and serving of eatables, etc. pose serious health problems. Tourists often feel at almost every place of importance that such features are prevalent. Local bodies concerned must see to it that proper and hygienic conditions are maintained. Similarly, centres to provide medical aid should also be opened.

7. Shopping Centres

Neat, clean, well-maintained shops, etc. attract the attention of the tourists. A well-set market rather adds to significance of the tourist site. It is obligatory on the part of the local bodies to see to it that shops are in their proper areas, meaning thereby that, no encroachments are made whereby traffic is affected. Shops must display rates of the items to be sold so that people are not fleeced and required items are available. Unfortunately, the situation seems to be reverse at most of the places. A visit to any tourist place will make you feel that shop keepers have their own rates. The tourists have no option but to buy at their whims. But in the long run this brings a bad name to the destination.

8. Local Transport

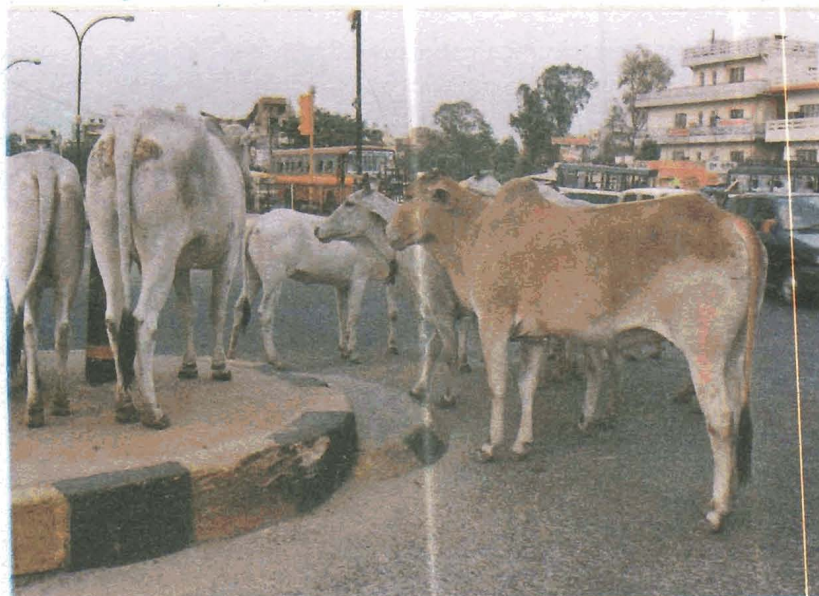
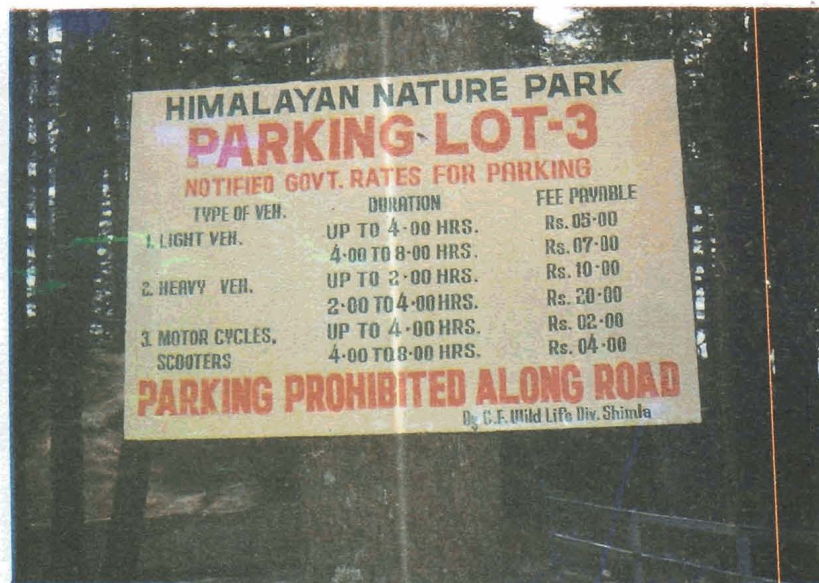
Providing local transport in the cities and towns and also from the cities/towns to the places of tourist interest is the responsibility of the local bodies concerned. Such a transport facility will save the tourists from considerable botheration. What is seen is that local transport service at sizeable places is not upto the mark. There are no fixed timings and the condition of the vehicles is also bad. Local bodies must endeavour to improve upon the local transport services and ensure that there is no over charging.

9. Security, Law and Order

Though maintenance of law and order is a State function yet the local bodies can extend their fullest co-operation to the District Police for maintaining proper law and order. Any place which is insecure and has problems of law and order would never be able to emerge as an attractive tourist destination. For the promotion of tourism it is essential that the place is secure, safe, and free from disturbances and disorders. At the same time local bodies should take steps to check such crime which generates with tourist activities (See Unit 34).

31.4 REASONS FOR POOR PERFORMANCE

We have discussed above certain important but basic functions of local bodies which also have a bearing on the promotion of tourism. It is a commonly believed fact that no organisation/unit does harm to its own interests. There are always certain reasons and factors responsible for not coming upto required expectations. Before pointing out the reasons for poor performance of local bodies in promoting tourism, it would be appropriate if we bring to light some of the issues which do establish the need for the involvement of local bodies in tourism promotion and development. These are as follows:





- i) If a tourist resort is promoted, or in other words, proper conditions are made by the local bodies to attract tourists to a place of prominence falling within its jurisdiction, it will provide a sense of pride to the locals. Tourists coming from a number of distant places, in and outside the country, would be able to know of the place.
- ii) Local elected body is a body of, for, and by the inhabitants of local area. An increase in tourism would bring direct/indirect benefits to the local inhabitants in the shape of earnings from marketing, sale of eatables, sale of locally manufactured goods, by way of service-charges, etc. thus, giving a boost to local economy.
- iii) In today's context a major reason is to enhance the sustainable capacity of the destination and check what are termed as the negative impacts of tourism.

For attaining some of the benefits as discussed above, the local bodies have to make use of their own resources. Looking from another end, providing for basic facilities like, water, better sanitation, eradication of communicable diseases, etc., are the obligatory tasks of the local bodies in relation to their own people. Therefore, by doing so they are not in any case directly attempting to promote tourism but by not doing so it certainly directly affects tourism. It would be appropriate to point out some of the major reasons for the local bodies not doing so. These are:

i) **Poor Finances**

It is very difficult to provide for any service or to undertake any function without proper finances available. Unfortunately, Indian local bodies have always been wanting of adequate and required amount of finances. This dissuades the bodies to take up maintenance as well as developmental tasks. Further more, there is misutilisation of the funds also. The finances available are not put to utilisation on required areas of priority.

ii) **Lack of Incentive**

Tourists approach a particular tourist spot/resort in a city/town/village. They spend heavily over there on account of staying as well as eating. Profit earned through it goes to the Agency concerned, whether private or governmental, and no share from that is given to the concerned local body. It amounts to a pitiable situation when the tourist agency wants the local body to provide roads, parks, shops, etc. but nothing out of the profits earned is passed on to the local bodies.

Rather, the Tourism Industry has always been critical of local tariffs or octroi. Nothing goes as maintenance or developmental fund to the local bodies. Hence, it is not surprising that they lack in taking up the tasks of tourism promotion.

- iii) Local bodies and officials, both elected as well as civil servants, have their own interests and politics. Very often development programmes are taken with short term gains in mind. Lack of long term perspective stands in the way of maintaining or developing works/activities contributing to the promotion of sustainable tourism.
- iv) There is mismanagement of the activities undertaken by the local bodies. The local bodies functionaries are neither well qualified nor properly trained to perform the assigned duties appropriately. They lack the sense of commitment and dedication to the employer organisation. Further more, neither the jobs are designed nor the goals fixed keeping in view the targets as well as social factors. All this results in mismanagement of the affairs which leads to poor performance of the local bodies.
- v) At times the local bodies and the state administration, existing at the District/City/Sub-division/block levels, are not having sound workable relationship. Lack of cordial relations affects the performance of both whereby the tourism promotion also faces challenges and problems.
- vi) Another factor is on account of political implications. Supposing the party in power at the state level is different than the party in power at the local level, the later hardly gets support of the State Government in developing the area. Furthermore, at the local levels also when there are different political groups trying to serve their own interests the performance of the local bodies is hampered.

vii) **Officials — Elected Representatives Relationships**

Every local body has elected representatives as well as professional permanent officials. Often it is found that relationship between these two wings, that is, the Deliberative and the Executive, is not as it should be. At times lack of mutual trust stands in the called for performance of the local bodies.

viii) By and large the local inhabitants are not involved, to the extent needed, with the functionaries of the local bodies. No scheme can be executed successfully unless the citizens co-operation and involvement is there. In many cases the local bodies suffer on count of lack of such help and co-operation being provided by the inhabitants of the local area.

31.5 MEASURES FOR IMPROVEMENT

We list here some measures for improvement.

- 1) Strong financial position of the local bodies.
- 2) Share of earnings of a tourist resort passed on to the local bodies.
- 3) Sound leadership of the local bodies for having long term perspective.
- 4) Active involvement of local bodies in resort development and tourism awareness programmes.
- 5) Friendly relationship among local elected representatives and officials.
- 6) Local bodies-District Administration co-ordination.
- 7) Co-operation of the citizens.
- 8) Good relations between local bodies and Tourist Resort Management.
- 9) Giving due importance to environment preservation, etc.

But the most crucial aspect for any destination is to decide its carrying capacity (See Unit 34) and this should be done by the local body. This will not only increase the life of the destination but also ease the pressure on local resources and residents.

Check Your Progress-2

1. Suggest measures for improvement.

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2. What are the reasons for poor performance?

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31.6 LET US SUM UP

Places of tourist interest are significant and important for the overall healthy and faster development of a local area. Local bodies should play a major role in promoting tourism by undertaking required maintenance and developmental tasks. Reasons responsible for the poor performance of local bodies could be taken care of by more vigilant and properly framed policies and work mechanism adopted by the local bodies. The local bodies should determine the nature, type and pace of tourism development in their regions. They should also take up tourism awareness programmes regarding beneficial as well as negative impacts. At the same time the destinations must get a share from tourism earnings to be used for the benefit of local bodies as well as residents.

31.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) Base your answer on Sub-section 31.2.2.
- 2) Take into consideration finances, link with over all development, the question of autonomy, misuse of power, etc. to answer. See Sub-section 31.2.3.

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) Increase in earnings, more powers, better coordination etc. Base your answer on Section 31.5.
- 2) Lack of share in earnings from tourism, no incentives, etc. See Section 31.4 for your answer.