

Growth of Local Government in India

- Self-governing village communities existed in India from the earliest times in the form of Sabah's.
- In the course of time, these village bodies took the shape of Panchayats (an assembly of five persons) and these Panchayats resolved issues at the village level.
- In modern times, elected local government bodies were created after 1882. Lord Rippon, who was the Viceroy of India at that time, took the initiative in creating these bodies. They were called the local boards.
- Government of India Act 1919, village Panchayats were established in a number of provinces. This trend continued after the Government of India Act of 1935.
- Panchayats were looked upon as instruments of decentralization and participatory democracy.

- When the Constitution was prepared, the subject of local government was assigned to the States. It was also mentioned in the Directive Principles as one of the policy directives to all governments in the country.

- Being a part of the Directive Principles of State Policy, this provision of the Constitution was nonjustifiable and primarily advisory in its nature.

- Firstly, the turmoil due to the Partition resulted in a strong unitary inclination in the Constitution. Nehru himself looked upon extreme localism as a threat to unity and integration of the nation.

- Secondly, there was a powerful voice in the Constituent Assembly led by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar which felt that the faction and caste-ridden nature of rural society would defeat the noble purpose of local government at the rural level.