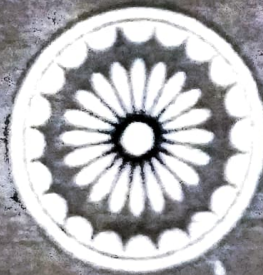


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URBAN GOVERNANCE IN COLONIAL MALABAR WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KANNUR MUNICIPALITY

M.C.Shalima

The British established trade relations in Malabar with the establishment of a factory at Thalassery during the last quarter of the 17th Century. However, they were able to establish political authority only during the last decade of the 18th Century. It led to dynamic changes in the society and economy of Malabar.¹ Initially, they focused on trade and economy and increasingly on political and administrative regard, which ended with the territorial appropriation of the country by the British.² Subsequently the colonial state realized the importance of political power of the region for the smooth conduct of commercial activities and this led to their interaction in native political structure. The British took control of Malabar in 1792 as part of the treaty of Srirangapattam and established an administrative institution as per the British standard. The most important reason for establishing British administration was to set up an efficient administrative system within the province since they regarded the prevailing one as anarchic.

During 1800, as part of some administrative reforms, the British divided the province into two parts under the control of two superintendents. Later, they divided the province into 10 districts, each run by a Revenue Collector. In the same year, the British government handed over the civil and military administration of Malabar from the Bombay Presidency to Madras Presidency allowing them to build up an effective administration in this province.³ All these led to the establishment of supreme power of the British in Kannur. As part of reforms introduced in the provincial administration, the British introduced the Town Improvement Act of 1865 which envisaged the introduction of municipal administration in Kannur. The main objective behind the introduction of municipal administration was to attract the interest of more efficient communities of the town in sharing the responsibilities of colonial administration. The subsequent result of this act was the constitution of Kannur municipality in 1867.

The main developmental schemes of Kannur municipality included the construction, repairing and cleaning of drains and maintenance of roads streets. The municipal council also gave priority to lighting, water supply and prevention of fire. The Kannur municipality maintained roads annually for the easy movement of goods and people which in turn facilitated the growth of trade.

Even before the colonial administration, Kannur has trade relations with Coorg. It is evident from that the municipality maintained a road from Kannur to Coorg to facilitate trade. During the Mysorean invasion Kakkad ferry developed as a hub of inland water transport. Some years later the municipal authority upgraded it by constructing roads to Kakkad. Kannur Municipality also maintained roads in order to develop transport facilities within the municipal limit. These roads connected different parts of the town and in turn they helped the easy movements of people and goods towards different directions. They are mainly Camp bazaar branch road, Cross road near municipal market, Anayikulku road, Jail road etc.

For the maintenance of roads around 55% of the total budget amount of the municipality was utilized during the period between 1906 and 1907. The mileage of roads increased from 23 miles in 1901 to 30 miles 1931. The difference was due to the transfer of roads to the municipal council maintained by the military department.⁴ The old wooden bridge connecting Payyambalam with the beach was replaced by a strong bridge with iron girders.⁵

The construction of beach road was undertaken in the year 1910-1911.⁶ The total cost of the work was Rs. 9417. This road was connected with Chalal road.⁷ The municipal council also maintained the municipal and the jail roads. The earthenware pipe drains were substituted in three places.

The road repairs were carried on departmentally during the year 1934-35. The sub overseer was in charge of the building work.