

## Local Government System in Dera Ghazi Khan During Colonial Period 1887-1947

Dr. Sohail Akhtar

Lecturer, Department of History & Political Science, Ghazi University, Dera Ghazi Khan.

Email: [sakhtar@gudgk.edu.pk](mailto:sakhtar@gudgk.edu.pk)

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9344-7551>

Dr. Tahira Mumtaz

Lecturer, Department of Politics & IR Govt. College Women University Sialkot.

Email: [tahira.mumtaz@gcwus.edu.pk](mailto:tahira.mumtaz@gcwus.edu.pk)

Dr. M. Aslam Faiz

Lecturer, Department of History & Political Science, Ghazi University, Dera Ghazi Khan.

Email: [mafaiz@gudgk.edu.pk](mailto:mafaiz@gudgk.edu.pk)

Received on: 02-10-2024

Accepted on: 05-11-2024

### Abstract

This research article is a brief overview of the analytical study of local government system established in Dera Ghazi Khan during the colonial period India. The forces of East India Company crossed the Indus and moved to Afghanistan and Sindh but left Punjab under the control of Sikh authority. After the Second Anglo-Sikh War, the British forces defeated Sikh at Multan in 1849 and captured Punjab. While General Courtland and Edward captured Dera Ghazi Khan in the same time. The Colonial government brought political and administrative reforms through new administrative setup. In view of the idea of devolution of powers to the lower level, the colonial government decided to involve local people in administrative and political activities. The local political system came into existence under an Act and this local government system based on primary institutions like Village Council, Union Council, Town Committees, Municipal Committees, District Council and District Boards, which proved to be precursors of slow political evolution. This research paper examines to explore and highlights the establishment of local governments system in Dera Ghazi Khan during the colonial period which is the key subject of this study.

**Keywords:** Colonial, Dera Ghazi Khan, District Boards, India, Local Government System.

### Introduction

Local government system is considered very important in developed democracies because people are the most important stakeholders of the state and government. In Sub-continent, colonial government did not engaged the ingenious people in mainstream administration.

*Local Government System in Dera Ghazi Khan During Colonial Period 1887-1947*

The idea of self-government was also emerged in India and the voice raised from Dera Ghazi Khan.<sup>1</sup> British government introduced local government system through the local Act-1887. Dera Ghazi Khan, which claimed to be considered as a backward District, local government system was also formed under the supervision of the Deputy Commissioner. In the beginning, town committees and Municipal committees were established. In the second phase, district board was also formed under the chairmanship of the Deputy Commissioner.

### **Statement of Problem**

The main problem of this study is the nature and the structure of a local government system which formed by the colonial government in Dera Ghazi Khan. The study finds to solve the problem, how much this local government system was important and it represented the people of Dera Ghazi Khan.

### **Research Objectives**

In this analytical study, the objectives are very simple to get information about the local government system in colonial era, the nature and structure of the local government institutions, powers and authorities and contribution for the people. Further, to know about the types of institutions in the local government system during the said period.

### **Research Questions**

The primary questions related to this research are following;

- Why the government formed local government system in India and what was the nature of this local government system?
- How much this local government was appropriate to enhance the representation of the people of Dera Ghazi Khan.

### **Review of Literature**

Review of literature played an important role in research particularly in social sciences. Although, a lot of material which exists in the context of local government. However, the material about the above-mentioned topic is not available due to the shortage of documentary sources and the lack of interest towards the indigenous historiography. The most relevant material is consulted to compile this topic and the most important sources in this context are the official record of the Deputy Commissioner office<sup>2</sup>, District Gazetteer<sup>3</sup>, Tareekh-e-Dera Ghazi Khan<sup>4</sup>, Murqa Dera Ghazi Khan<sup>5</sup>, Ihsan Changwani<sup>6</sup>, Dera Ghazi Khan Tareekh Ky Ainay Mein<sup>7</sup>, Tahzeebi Khadokhal<sup>8</sup>, Urban Baldiyati Siasat<sup>9</sup>, Dera Ghazi Khan Ki Intakhabi Tareekh<sup>10</sup>, Tareekh-e-Layyah<sup>11</sup>, Tareekh-e-Muzaffargarh<sup>12</sup>, District Gazetteer Muzaffargarh<sup>13</sup>, Tareekh Punjab<sup>14</sup> are remarkable.

### **Research Methodology**

In this analytical form of study, historic method of research based on qualitative approach has been used through documentary material based on primary and secondary sources i.e. official reports, letters, correspondence, books and articles.

*Local Government System in Dera Ghazi Khan During Colonial Period 1887-1947*

## **Discussion**

The role of local government is considered very important in development. The experts of economic development always claim that the Rapid growth of Economics is due to the structure of good local self- government. Since from colonial government, District Council was also responsible for coordinating the different activities of Governmental departments with the most of those that were related to the district Council but chairperson of district council was the deputy commissioner who was responsible for general administration. In Pakistan, local government was embodied, as it was known as the system basic democracy. The failure of politician in the first decade of the emergence of Pakistan, your many differences between the people on ethnic and lingual biasness. was very important to evolve the system with meet the problems of national integration and regeneration economic and administrative fields. The structure of the basic democracy system or local government was supplemented by four types of local government institutions as District Council, Thana Council, Union Council, Town Committee were remarkable.

1-First of all to give much authority and responsibility to the local people at all levels. 2- Second important point was there to put government officer implementing government project in close and institutional contact with the representative of the people so that dog and programs of the government for the people can be explained and discuss with the people and their sport and coordination secured. 3.Third main objective was who made the government servant sir cost yes of the need for respecting we views of the people and securing their suggestion and criticism. 4.subject understanding between the government and people of the region. the devolution of responsibilities and power to the people at various level has enabled the people to feed that they have a real share in the running of the affairs of the country and has created in them optimism and enthusiasm place of dependency and frustration.this system especially improve the life of the rural areas which were facing a burden and problems. Local government is a term which applies to different Institution in different countries.

The British government also started some constitutional reforms to protect their interests, including the establishment of local governments. These local governments came into existence under the headship of the Deputy Commissioner of the district. One of their goals was to earn revenue. This analytical study deals mainly with the local governments of Dera Ghazi Khan in the colonial period. The failure of the War of Independence in 1857 created a sense of deprivation among the Muslims. The English government created such an atmosphere of fear that no one would speak the truth. A new revolution took place when colonial rule in the subcontinent decided to involve the people in political and administrative affairs in the form of local governments. The British rulers established local governments first under the Act of 1862, the Act of 1887 and then, the government approved the appointment of Indian advisers to advise the British Viceroy and the establishment of provincial councils with Indian members. The British expanded participation in legislative councils with the Indian Councils Act 1892. Municipal Corporations and District Boards were formed with the help of local administration. Elected Indian members were included in these local governments. As in other regions of the subcontinent, local governments were established in Dera Ghazi Khan during the colonial period, which gave the local people an opportunity to be close to the government. The British occupied the territory of Dera Ghazi

*Local Government System in Dera Ghazi Khan During Colonial Period 1887-1947*

Khan and established local governments, which were locally elected. According to the government, before the political awareness of the people in the region were poor. The early life of man was not sound. Although people were like that of wild animals, but with the passage of time, Sati consciousness, which was the symbol of human needs, did not arise suddenly, but the essence of the experiences and needs of many centuries appeared in the color of social development. Aristotle, 384-322 BC, declared the family to be the primary institution of the state. Megasthenes or Megasthenes. There was an early outline of local government in India from 300 AD. He was a contemporary of Chandragupta Maurya. Thus, a tradition is also found. The Panchayat system at the local level is as old as our Aqah. The smallest of the municipal system was the Akani (village). Which was managed with the help of village elders.<sup>15</sup> While the term local government in colonial era means a government. Local government is a term that is used in different senses. For example, such government institutions that were established in an area outside the capital of the state are called local government or such local institutions that are legally established in a specific area are local government. For example, municipalities were district boards and *panchayats*. Whereas, according to the United Nations, local government is an organization defined by law. He who gets special access to local affairs gets the power to levy taxes and can also take labor for certain purposes. This organization comes into existence through local elections or elections. Encyclopedia Britannica states that a local government is a body that has authority over a government in relation to the exercise of its powers over a limited area.<sup>16</sup> In 1863, local bodies system of government introduced. In which there were District Board Municipal Committees. Five municipal committees were established in Dera Ghazi Khan. Among them, Dera Ghazi Khan Municipal Committee, Jampur Municipal Committee, Dajal Municipal Committee, Rajanpur Municipal Committee, Kot Mithan Municipal Committee were once included.

**Der Ghazi Khan Municipal Committee**

Dera Ghazi Khan Committee was considered as the second rank committee at that time. In 1891 Dera Ghazi Khan Municipality had a population of 23899 with 21 members.<sup>17</sup> While its members included Civil Surgeon, Accounts Officer, District School Officer, Deputy Commissioner based on educational qualification and sympathy or loyalty to the Government nominated Engineer WD. Municipal Commissioner for Municipal Committee. Every person was elected from his Committee and performed duties in his own Committee. As far as Dera Municipality is concerned. Positive traditions between Hindus and Muslims should be maintained. In which the president used to be from the Muslims and the vice president from the Hindus. Whenever the president became the number of the provincial assembly, he was out of the local municipal committee due to moving out of his area. Meanwhile, the responsibilities of the vice president were increasing. In Dera Municipality, Muslims held class-IV jobs while Hindus took other higher jobs. Both of them used to celebrate this because Hindus were ahead of Muslims in terms of educational ability and both were aware of their potential. The responsibilities of financial affairs were generally in the hands of Hindus.<sup>18</sup> Before the partition of the subcontinent, Dera Municipality had the following presidents. Mian Muhammad Afzal Bhatti was Advocate 1925-1928, Atta Muhammad Jaskani, 1930-1928. Mian Muhammad Afzal Bhatti was Advocate Alig 1930-1931, Sheikh Faiz Muhammad

*Local Government System in Dera Ghazi Khan During Colonial Period 1887-1947*

1931-1934. Mian Muhammad Afzal Bhatti Advocate Alig 1935-1939, Sheikh Faiz Muhammad 1945-1940, Akhund Abdul Karim Advocate 1946-1950. While the responsibilities of the Vice President were performed by Parmanand Bhutani.<sup>19</sup>

**Jampur Municipal Committee**

There were ten members in this municipal committee who were appointed by the Deputy Commissioner, two members were official and eight were non-official. According to the Imperial Gazetteer, the population of Jampur Municipality is 97,247 in 1901, while in 1891, the same population is 83,583.<sup>20</sup> The responsibility of the Municipal Committee was to run the civic affairs and institutions located within the urban limits, including hospitals, schools and other welfare institutions. Despite the best efforts, the records of the Municipal Committee Jampur could not be found which was destroyed due to an accident in 1970. The property register of the Municipal Committee was available which contained the records of the properties of the Municipal Committee located within the municipal limits including shops, hospitals, Roads, latrines, schools, checkpoints were marked. The available municipal committee property mirror confirms the following workers. Among them, the names of Sher Muhammad, Zaildar Hakam Chand, Rab Nawaz, Shikan Das, and Ibrahim are found. While the verification signature of Ghulam Mohammad Pathan as Vice President in 1951 is there, the signature of Municipal Commissioner Allah Bakhsh in 1957 is clear. The original copy has been folded at the end.<sup>21</sup>

**Dajal Municipal Committee**

In the Municipal Committee Dajal, there were three government officials, deputy commissioner, stunt commissioner and tehsildar, and eight non-government members. Those who were appointed by the Deputy Commissioner. Its population was 6213. Its income was 6,800 and expenditure 6,900 in 1902-03, similarly in 1903-4 the income was 9,100 and expenditure 9,200. Mukhi Narayana Das was the vice president of the Dajal Municipal Committee as evidenced by his contribution to the Silver Jubilee celebrations of George V in 1935.<sup>22</sup> The division that has remained in office till India, thus the General Secretary was Jag Deshmukh, other members were Syed Jafar Shah Geelani. Jindwada, which can be seen in the record showing total income 460 total expenditure 407 and balance Rs. 589 bearing the signature of R.U. Louis dated 4-8-1893 that is folded at the end, has been given.

**Formation of Rajanpur Municipal Committee**

After the new administrative division, Rajanpur became a Tehsil of Dera Ghazi Khan. During the decline of the Miranis, when Ghulam Shah's hold weakened, Makhdoom Rajan Shah established his rule over this region. During the Sikh rule and then the British rule, this area was part of Dera Ghazi Khan. During the British era, it got the status of a tehsil and the local tribes were also given tamandaris, among which the Mazaris and Dreshaks were prominent. If the municipal committee is formed, the rest of the members will also be included under the chairmanship of the deputy commissioner. Among them are Ganga Dahar, Qasim Ali and many others. A meeting of Rajanpur Municipal Committee held on 26 April 1919. It was chaired by Anderson while other members included Mr. Ganga Dahar, SL Chotal Ram, Qasim Ali, Gainsham Das, Bacha Sham Das, Wahid Bakhsh and Pallu Khan. This municipal committee

*Local Government System in Dera Ghazi Khan During Colonial Period 1887-1947*

also had its own seat and its annual revenue was Rs.6100 while the expenditure was Rs.5000. Among its various activities is to improve a vernacular school. Similarly, in 1901 Rajanpur Municipal Committee had a population of 3017.<sup>23</sup>

**Municipal Committee Kot Mithan**

The town of Kot Mithan on the banks of the Indus River in the southern part of the district was important and was a commercial center but it was washed away by the Indus River in 1862. . His annual income in 1902 was Rs.3800 and in 1903-04 it was Rs.38001. While the annual expenditure was Rs.35001. In the basic structure of this municipal committee committee, the total number of members were three official officers and six non-official officers. In 1891, its total population was 3487. From the register of proceedings of the Municipal Committee which held its meeting on 3rd August 1893, it is known that the meeting was held under the chairmanship of Mr. R.U. Lowis Vice-President and among its other members, Nizam Shah, Jandoda is mentioned in the records. It is also known from the records that there were polls in various cases and some expenditure and income records are also shown according to which the income is Rs.460 and the balance is also shown as Rs. (Dated 08-04- 1893 and signed by Mr. R. Lewis-<sup>24</sup>

**District Board Dera Ghazi Khan**

Under the local governments, the area of the district other than the municipality was placed under the district board, which was chaired by the deputy commissioner. This board usually managed all the affairs of the district outside the municipal limits, including schools, roads, hospitals, drainage and other administrative and welfare institutions. used to go Who used to carry out the affairs of public welfare with mutual connection and brotherhood. The Deputy Commissioner, Superintendent of Police, District and Sessions Judge, Civil Surgeon were usually British as all these officials had no personal interest, so they provided a very clean and competent administration to the district. Both the Deputy Commissioner and the Superintendent of Police were British. Cars used to patrol the city at night in the guise of Pathans. There is no evidence of bribery in any administrative matters. Locally the revenue or financial affairs were entrusted to the Hindus who collected very honestly and the police was very efficient. False or political cases were not filed.<sup>25</sup> While there are many examples of registering such cases locally, the nobles involved the poor in illegal cases. A committee was constituted for educational institutions under the District Board, the proceedings of whose meetings are recorded from 1936-37 to 1941-42. On this side, the finance committee's action has also been completed at the end. On which the names of Sheikh Faiz Muhammad Nawabzada Muhammad Khan, Hari Kishan Lal Syed Faiz Shah Sir Muhammad Afzal are found. Instructions for running the management of the schools by the district board have also been written at the end. The names of Jamal Khan Laghari as Vice President and Muhammad Khan Laghari as Vice President are found in history.<sup>26</sup>

The period of Nawabzada Muhammad Khan Laghari is from 1944 to 1948. From the Hindu side, the names of Shri Parmand and Shri Hari Kishanlal Sachi Deva (Sachateva) are found, who were running the affairs of Dera Ghazi Khan of the District Board for a long time, besides many others. Among them, one name is Ghulam Akbar from Tala Mughlan, but it seems difficult to determine his era because the record has been lost due to the loss of flood.<sup>27</sup>



*Local Government System in Dera Ghazi Khan During Colonial Period 1887-1947*

The British took control of the area and introduced a system of apparently local elections or so-called elections, often electing those who were government fringes. Members had more contact with the people than with the government. How could Dera, a backward region ruled by feudal lords and warlords, accept this system? In which public opinion is not respected. Although apparently this system was prevalent, but there was no proof of it in practice. The government officials used to run the affairs of the country together with the members and the people were not happy. There were several reasons for this, in which economic backwardness and political backwardness are the main ones. The local chiefs and elders were not ready for such developments. Wherever there was the best agricultural land and pastures in the region, all these were occupied by the property owners. While the local population was backward and helpless, that of the landlords and their representatives used the poor people as slave. These poor people used to obey his commands without question. The common man did not benefit from these governments.

### **Conclusion**

Human history is a witness that the devolution of power to the lower level can be a nightmare until the local governments and the government machinery become independent and empowered. are guaranteed. In this research article, the structure and affairs of the local governments established in Dera Ghazi Khan district during the British period have been briefly reviewed. The infrastructure of these local governments appears to be quite limited and subject to government will. During the colonial period in India, Dera Ghazi Khan is thought a backward region and especially it was considered that the people of Dera Ghazi Khan did not know about political sense. However, the formation of local government system, government faced serious political resistance and maturity in the elections of District Council and District Board. These local institutions were the only plate-form for the people to solve their problems. Local government system motivated the people to initiate and participate in political activities, which promoted electoral politics of provincial assemblies in future. Most of the members of these local government institutions started their politics and joined Unionist Party in the District. In short, the local government system proved beneficial for people and provided representation in government, which reduced their deprivation.

### **References**

- 
- <sup>1</sup> S. M. Aslam Khan Malghani, *Self-Government Aor Hindustan*, Al-Moeen, Amrtasar. 1915.
  - <sup>2</sup> File, English Record Room Branch, Office of the Deputy Commissioner, District Dera Ghazi Khan.
  - <sup>3</sup> District Gazetteer, District Dera Ghazi Khan, 1893-94, Sang-e-Meel Publication, Lahore, 2008.
  - <sup>4</sup> Abdul Qadir Leghari, *Tareekh-e-Dera Ghazi Khan*, Salman Academy, Dera Ghazi Khan, 1987.
  - <sup>5</sup> Ghulam Ali Nutkani, *Muraqa-e-Dera Ghazi Khan*, 1985.
  - <sup>6</sup> Ihsan Ahmad Changwani, *Tareekh-e-Dera Ghazi Khan*,
  - <sup>7</sup> Mazhar Ali Lashari, *Dera Ghazi Khan, Tareekh Ky Ainay Mein*,
  - <sup>8</sup> Hashim Sher, *Dera Ghazi Khan Ky Tehzeebi Khadokhal*, Fiction House Lahore, 1993.
  - <sup>9</sup> Malik Siraj Ahmad, *Jhok Publishers*, Multan, 2018.
  - <sup>10</sup> Malik Siraj Ahmad, *Tareekh Dera Ghazi Khan*, Jhok Publishers, Multan, 2022.
  - <sup>11</sup> Noor Muhammad Thind, *Tareekh-e-Layyah*,
  - <sup>12</sup> Khair Muhammad Budh, *Tareekh-e-Muzaffargarh*,

*Local Government System in Dera Ghazi Khan During Colonial Period 1887-1947*

---

- <sup>13</sup> District Gazetteer Muzaffargarh, 1929, Sang-e-Meel, Lahore, 2008.  
M.Siraj, Ahmad, era Ghazi Khan ki Urban Baldiyati Siasat.
- <sup>15</sup> Imperial Gazetteer of India, Provincial Series Punjab, Vol-II,1908,P.265
- <sup>16</sup> Ram Nath Sachideva, Dera Phulan a Sehra, New Delhi, 1987, P.152
- <sup>17</sup> Development of Local Self-Government in Punjab, M.S.Iqbal, Lahore, 1971, P.100
- <sup>18</sup> Ram Nath Sachideva, Dera Phulan a Sehra, New Delhi, 1987, P.51
- <sup>19</sup> Imperial Gazetteer of India, Provincial Series Punjab, Vol-II,1908,P.268
- <sup>20</sup> Report on the Administration of Punjab and its Dependencies,1881, P. 79.
- <sup>21</sup> Ram Nath Sachideva, Dera Phulan a Sehra, New Delhi, 1987, P.51
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid, P.52
- <sup>23</sup> Local Government, District Gazetteer, Appendix, No.19.
- <sup>24</sup> Imperial Gazetteer of India, Provincial Series Punjab, Vol-II,1908, P.267.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid
- <sup>26</sup> Abdul Qadir Laghari, P.163.
- <sup>27</sup> District Gazetteer, P.327.