

4. PUBLIC AMENITIES IN CITIES

What are the differences between cities and villages? What public amenities would be necessary in a city? How can these be organised? Discuss in the class.

IMRAN AND HIS FATHER COME TO AMARBOR

Imran came with his father Rahmat Ali, to Amarbor. Imran's uncle Habib lives there. Amarbor is a small town near Kaniyakhedi village. There are around 40,000 people living in this town.

They got off the bus when it stopped at Amarbor bus stand. As Imran came out of the bus he found a big board with the words 'Amarbor Nagar Palika Bus Stand' written on it. After reading it he asked his father, "Baba, what is this 'Nagar Palika'?"

Rahmat Ali explained, "A Nagar Palika or a municipal council is like a village panchayat. Just as the village panchayat takes care of the various public amenities like sanitation, water supply, streets, bridges, etc., in villages, the municipal councils take care of them in the cities." Imran and Rahmat Ali got into an auto-rickshaw and set off for Habib's home.

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL (NAGAR PALIKA)

In the previous chapter we learnt about village panchayats. From every ward in the village people elect their representatives. These representatives form the village panchayat. Similarly cities and towns, too, are divided into small wards, and from each ward a person is elected. There are more people living in a city or town. So there are more representatives or

members in a municipal council.

Like the municipal council, you may have heard about the *nagar panchayat* and municipal corporation (*nagar nigam*), too. Municipal corporations are formed in very big cities. In Madhya Pradesh cities like Bhopal, Indore, Jabalpur, etc. have municipal corporations. Smaller and medium sized cities have municipal councils. In very large villages that are in the process of becoming towns, a *nagar panchayat* is formed.

- Give examples of municipal councils, municipal corporations and nagar panchayat in your district or nearby area.
- What is the difference between a municipal council and a municipal corporation?

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF AMARBOR

Streets

While travelling in the auto-rickshaw from the bus stand Imran looked around him curiously. Streets in the city had pucca roads, unlike the kutcha village streets. But there were many potholes in the roads.

Rahmat Ali said to the driver, "Slow down. The streets in your town are very bad. Why doesn't the municipal council do anything about it?"

"What can we do? The previous members of the municipal council did many things - they built a park, set up many shopping complexes, etc. But neither did they maintain the streets properly, nor did they care about the water supply. People here are asking 'what is the use of building shops and parks when you don't have enough water and the roads are full of holes and stones.'



"When elections were held again to the municipal council most of the old members lost. Every candidate had promised 'we shall make proper arrangements for the water supply'. People elected the new members with great hopes. But neither were the streets repaired, nor were the problems in the water supply solved."

By now they had reached Habib's house. Imran got off the autorickshaw and went into the house looking for Munnu. Munnu was Iman's cousin and they were great friends. Hugging each other they went out to play.

Water

After some time Munnu's mother called out "Munnu, O Munnu, it is time for the water to come. Go and keep the pots and buckets near the tap. Today you and Imran should fetch the water."

Imran went with Munnu to fetch water. The tap was in the street nearby. People were standing in a queue near the tap along with their buckets and pots. Munnu and Imran, too, joined the line. Imran wondered how water came into these taps. In their village there was no tap water and everyone filled water from the well.

At around 6 o'clock water began to flow from the taps. One after another people began to fill water in their pots and buckets. Some

women were washing their vessels. Munnu and Imran, too, filled their buckets and pots. They reached home and poured the water into one of the three large drums. For almost one hour they made trips back and forth. And by seven the water taps dried up.

Imran asked Munnu, "Why does water come only for so little time?"

Munnu answered, "Yes, one hour in the evening and one hour in the morning. You have to manage with whatever water you can fill during this time. In the evening the drums are filled. By the time you finish washing your clothes and vessels the taps stop running. Then we have to fill water in the morning"

Imran told Munnu, "In the village our mohalla has a well. We can fetch water whenever we like and as much as we like."

As everyone sat together for snacks in the evening, Imran asked his uncle. "Chacha, please tell me, how does water come in these taps, and from where does it come?"

Imran's uncle began to explain "The town has two big tube-wells. From these tube-wells a motor is used to pump water to huge overhead tanks. These overhead tanks are connected to every colony with pipes. When these tanks are full, a valve is opened and water is distributed to various colonies. The water then makes its way through a network of pipes and flows into every tap."

You have learned about the village panchayat. In the table below some information about municipal council is given. Compare this with the panchayat and fill up the table.

Some Rules of the Village Panchayat and the Municipal Council

Municipal council	Village Panchayat
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formed for 5 years 2. People living in that city can cast their votes to elect it. 3. Anyone who is 18 or above has the right to vote. 4. From every ward a representative is elected. 5. Government appoints Executive Officer. 6. There is an elected chairperson. 7. The people directly elect chairperson. 	

Imran asked, "But who does all this?"

Uncle answered "We have a municipal council here. Its employees run this entire system."

Street Lights

Slowly it became darker. Street lights began to glow. Habib uncle explained that the municipal council maintained these lights too.

In the previous chapter you learned that in villages gram panchayat is formed to maintain roads, make facilities for water supply, and provide other similar public amenities. In cities and towns, too, it is necessary to maintain public amenities like water, electricity etc. For this purpose a municipal council or municipal corporation or nagar panchayat is formed.

- **What reason did auto-rickshaw driver give for the bad condition of the roads?**
- **What arrangement is made in Amarbor for the supply of water?**
- **What are the functions of a municipal council? Describe them from what you have read in the above passages.**

WATER PROBLEM IN AMARBOR

The water supply in Amarbor was quite irregular. Sometimes water came in the taps only once in three days. The people were put to a lot of hardship by this.

Distribution of Water Tax Bills

One day an employee of the municipal council came to the Subhash ward. He had come to give people their bills for the water and sewerage tax to be paid by them.

For two days there had been no water in the taps. Some people started shouting at the employee, "You come to distribute the receipts but don't bother to actually supply us the water we paid for. Now this is the third day since we had any water in these taps. Why should we pay any taxes?"

Municipal council employee was taken aback, he collected himself and replied, "As far as taxes are concerned, you will have to pay the tax or else your water connection will

be cut. I understand your troubles. If there is no water in the taps, why don't you talk to Madanlal the member of the municipal council from your ward? He is also the member of the water committee. He can solve your problem."

"What difference does it make for him, he even won't know when the water comes and goes. He has his own bore well."

Munnibai who was listening to the above conversation said, "This man is not at fault. He is only an employee of the municipal council. If we want to get the problem solved then we will have to meet Madanlal. After all, that's why we have elected him as the member of our ward."

Meeting with the member

Some people were willing to go with Munnibai to the member's house. Around 15-20 people picked up their empty buckets and pots and went to Madanlal's house. After some time Madanlal came out. Finding so many people standing there with empty pots and buckets he was a bit hesitant but asked, "What happened? Why are you all here?"

Munnibai replied, "In our colony every other day the taps go dry. For the last three days we have received no water. We are fed up with all this. You will have to do something. You are our representative. If you don't make arrangements for water, we will all fill water from the bore well in your home."

Looking at the people's mood, Madanlal got frightened. He said, "Yes, yes, let me see. I shall make arrangements to send water in a tanker. There is so much of a water problem because we have a very old pump. It develops problems every other day. We will have to buy a new one. But the municipal council has no



money for this. For the last three years we have been demanding money from the state government. But we have not got any reply. Now the pump is being repaired, by tomorrow it will be all right."

The tap water continued to be irregular. The water supply through the tanker, too, was not available regularly.

Everyone in Amarbor was disgusted with the state of affairs. The women, in particular, were very angry, as they were the ones who had to fetch water from the municipal taps. Those who had money began to dig their own wells or install their private hand pumps. This was very expensive and they were very unhappy about this. The ordinary people of course could not afford to do this and continued to suffer.

People of Amarbor Meet the Chairperson

Munnibai knew the water problem could be solved only with a new pump for the municipal council. For this she knew people would have to come together and meet the members and the chairperson. She contacted many people of her ward. They were reluctant at first. They said, "What can we do? Who will listen to us?" But as the water supply got worse and worse, many women joined Munnibai.

The people of Munnibai's colony and many other people, too, went in a group to the chairperson. Munnibai said, "This water scarcity is causing great hardship. We know that it is **necessary** to buy a new pump. We have come to submit a **memorandum**. This memorandum has the signature of 500 people. When you write to the government for a grant please submit this along with it. At least let them know what troubles we are facing. If you can give us a copy of your application for a grant we shall try to meet the collector and the M.L.A. with it."



The municipal council chairperson got angry, "Have you come to teach us? We have written so many times to the state government. They do not listen even to me, so why should they listen to you?" he shouted.

Munnibai did not lose her courage and said, "For the last three years we have been suffering because of your water supply system. We know your problems. That is why we came. We shall also let the collector and M.L.A. know about the situation. They will have to listen. The M.L.A. was elected by our votes. The M.L.A. knows that if the water problem is not solved he will lose our votes in the coming election."

The municipal council chairperson calmed down. He kept the memorandum. Munnibai gathered everyone and went to see the M.L.A. They gave a copy of the memorandum to the collector too.

The Problem Gets Solved

After three months money reached the municipal council for the new pump. Water began to come in the taps every day. This is how the water problem of Amarbor was solved. Even today the people remember Munnibai for this. Now everyone in the city goes to the municipal council to get their problems solved. They also send memorandum to the state government.

- What was the problem facing the people of Amarbor?
- What did Munnibai do to get Amarbor's problem solved?

REPRESENTATIVES

We read in the last chapter about village *panchayats*. In urban and rural areas one person is elected from each ward every five years. It is the elected representative who makes up the municipal council, municipal corporation, *nagar panchayat* and *gram panchayat*. To become a representative means

that the people have elected him or her. The representative is supposed to speak on behalf of the people. There are various responsibilities expected from him or her, such as solving the problems of the colony, making arrangements for a proper water supply, getting the roads repaired, etc. This is how civic amenities are provided and maintained in cities and villages.

SOME IMPORTANT FUNCTIONS OF MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS, MUNICIPAL COUNCILS AND *NAGAR PANCHAYATS*

You have learnt about some functions of municipal councils in the story of Amarbor. There are some other functions too:

- a. Keeping the city clean
- b. Keeping the markets in the city clean.
- c. Controlling stray animals and cattle, and caring for the confiscated animals.
- d. Recording births and deaths in the city.
- e. Taking necessary action to check contagious diseases in the city.
- f. Building libraries, schools, gardens and parks.

In municipal corporations, municipal councils and *nagar panchayats* various committees are formed. The representatives of the people are members of these committees. There are separate committees to provide water, clean up roads, look after public health, etc. These committees take decisions on various aspects related to the subject of their committee.

SOURCES OF INCOME FOR THE MUNICIPAL COUNCILS, MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS AND *NAGAR PANCHAYAT*

1. Taxes from people who have land or houses in the city.
2. Taxes from people for water, street lights and collection of garbage.
3. Taxes on the shops and businesses.
4. Entertainment tax on cinema halls, circuses, exhibitions, etc.
5. Grants from the state government.

If you live in a city, discuss with your teacher:

*Does your city have a municipal council, a municipal corporation or a *nagar panchayat*?*

Who is the Mayor or Chairperson?

How much tax do you pay for water?

When do workers come to your colony to clean up the garbage?



EXERCISE

1. Write any 5 functions of the municipal council, municipal corporation and *nagar panchayat*. Under which sub-headings would you find these details?
2. You are living in a city. Garbage is piled up near your colony since many days. To whom will you write a letter requesting that it be cleaned up? Write such a letter.
3. Why is it necessary to have proper arrangements to keep the city clean? Discuss and write in detail.
4. If you live in a city or town, where do you dump the garbage of your house? Is there any proper arrangement to keep your locality clean?
5. Tijiya and Munnibai solved the water problem in their village and town. How did they do it? What similarities or differences can you find in these examples?
6. Two people were talking to each other. One said, "Just as villages have *gram sabha*, in cities, too, there should be a *sabha*." The other replied, "But there are too many people living in the city. How can you bring so many people together? Where will you make them sit together and have a discussion?" The first person said, "Then there should be a *sabha* of wards." Do you think this is a good idea? Explain your reasons.