

STATUS OF SCAVENGERS IN NAGERCOIL MUNICIPALITY BEFORE 2009

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Introduction

Cleanlines can avoid many diseases. Environment must be kept clean for sustainability. Sanitary workers play a vital role in maintaining the cleanliness of our society. A sanitation worker has a dirty job, but it is one that most communities can't live without. Sanitation workers make sure neighbourhoods, street and public areas stay clean and they dispose of trash in safe, effective and environmentally friendly ways. Ensuring recyclables such as glass, plastic are properly separated from other types of garbage for effective recycling. Operating an automated garbage disposal truck to lift garbage dumpsters and trash cans when necessary. This paper tries to throw some light on the works of the sanitary workers of Nagercoil Municipality. At present Nagercoil has been elevated to the status of Corporation. This research paper highlights the status of Scavengers in Nagercoil Municipality.

History of Local Self Government

The Early vedic age the village administration was carried on under the village headman, who was called the Gramani. He used to be the leader of the village. In olden days every village was a republic. The village was governed by a panchayat. During the Tamil Sangam period in Tamilnadu the resident of an Ur met and transacted local government affairs through the village assembly system during the golden age of the Cholas. Such a vibrant local government, however, declined under the Muslim and Vijayanagar rulers.

The year 1882 witnessed the landmark resolution on local self-government of Local Self Government of Lord Rippon. This resolution called upon the provincial Government to constitute local boards in rural and urban areas for boards to be given powers to manage their revenue and expenditure for subject such as education, medical services and public services to be brought under the control of local boards and for boards to have a greater proportion of non-official. The Government of India suggested to the Government of Madras to implement the recommendation of Rippon's resolution in the Madras Presidency.

History of Nagercoil Municipality

In 1894 when Nagercoil town was under the erstwhile Travancore state a committee was formed mainly with government officials to look after the conservancy and sanitation. In 1920 the Travancore District Municipality Act was passed and Nagercoil was a Municipal town. In 1942 the Govt of Travancore appointed a commissioner as an executive authority for the Municipality by the Travancore Cochin Govt.

In 1956 this town was merged with the Govt of Tamilnadu and as 2nd grade. The Tamilnadu District Municipality Act 1920 was extended to this Municipality from 1-4-1959 and this Municipality was upgraded as 1st grade Municipality from 1-4-1961 selection grade Municipality from 12-10-1978 and now special grade Municipality with effect from 30-05-1988.

The area of the town is 24.27 sq.km with a population of 2,08,14. The town is having four villages namely 1. Nagercoil village 2. Vadisvesswaram 3. Vadasery village 4. Neendakarai village etc.

This town is having 52 wards is declared by the Govt order. Recently the Tamilnadu govt upgrade Nagercoil in Kanyakumari District and Hosur in Krishnagiri District.

Municipalities Administration

Prior to the year 1965, all local self governing bodies in the state were functioning under one head of the department. The designation of the head of the department was Inspector of Municipal councils and Local boards, and it existed till 1962 the post was redesignated as Additional Development Commissioner. Again in 1964, the nomenclature was changed as joint development commissioner. In the year 1965, the administrative set up of local bodies was bifurcated. For municipalities, the controlling officer at the state level was chief Electoral officer and for panchayats, the head Department of municipalities and in 1970 the post was redesignated as Director of Municipal Administration.

District level control

At the district level, the collector is the supreme authority to control the local bodies, in addition, there are also regional level Department officers to control them.

Besides the Director at the state level, there was Regional Directors to administer the municipalities in Kanyakumari District are under the control of the Regional Director of Municipalities, Tirunelveli. The municipality is headed by the commissioner in the official side and the chairman and his council in the non-official side.

Classification of Municipalities

The Municipalities in the state have been classified into various grades, taking into account of their annual income and the income limit for the purpose of classification, has been prescribed in G.O.MS.No.400, R.D & L.A., dated 23 March.

If the annual income of a municipality is above rupees 100 lakh, it can claim to be declared as a special grade municipality. If the annual income rupees 50 lakh, the status of the municipalities classified as selection grade. The first grade municipality should have an annual income of more than rupees 25 lakh. If the annual income of a municipality is more than rupees 10 lakh, it is classified as second grade municipality. Ordinary, municipalities are constituted initially, is classified as third grade municipality.

Of the four municipalities in Kanyakumari district, Nagercoil Municipality is a selection grade municipality while the rest are third grade municipalities. They remain as such ever since their construction in 1920, even though the annual income of these municipalities had crossed Rs. 10 lakhs.

Function of the Municipalities

The Municipal Act lays down both obligatory and disciplinary duties on municipalities.

Obligatory Function :

1. Relief during famine and scarcity 2. Maintenance of public roads, street, lane culverts and causeways 3. Maintenance of reading room 4. Maintenance of parks and gardens, 5. Maintenance of play grounds 6. Conduct of exhibition and fairs. 7. Cleaning of streets, drains and scavenging 8. Maintenance of hospital and dispensaries 9. Maintenance of avenue 12. Maintenance of street lighting 13. Elementary education 14. Water supply public service connection 15. Drainage 16. Town planning.

The sanitation of the town is looked after by the following up staff of the Municipality.

Nagercoil Municipality	
1. Selection grade, sanitary Inspector	1
2. Sanitary Inspector	8
3. Sanitary Supervisors	16
4. Scavengers	119
5. Drain cleaner	35

These members of the staff are under the administrative control of the municipal Health Officer.

The municipality maintains 52 public conveniences of which four are 'pay and use' category. Three of these four are attached with bathrooms, there are also four septic tank latrines. The income derived from the 'pay and use' public convenience in the year 1987-88, is Rs.195 lakhs

Nagercoil Municipality

Nagercoil headquarters of the district has been a municipal town since 1920. The municipality was upgraded to selection grade in 1978. Its status was further upgraded as special grade with effect from July 1988. It is the biggest municipality in the district. The jurisdiction of this municipality is spread over an area of 24,27 s.km, the population of the municipal-town as per the census of 1981, is 1,71,648 and the present (1988) approximate population is 2,00,000. The normal annual income of the municipality is Rs.195 lakhs.

Public Health and Sanitation

This municipality maintains an Allopathic hospital, ten Maternity and child welfare centres and a family welfare centre and the maintenance cost out to Rs. 1.10 Lakh, Rs. 2.75 Lakh and Rs 94,000 per annum respectively. The family welfare centre is however, run with full government grant. The municipality deposits the trash and the other wastages collected in the streets. Three lorries of the municipality carry the rubbish materials to the yard. The manure from the yard had fetched an income of Rs. 1 lakh in the year 1986-87.

Kinds of Jobs

The workers are Sweeping, Drainage cleaning and Fogging are the works undertaken by the Municipality.

Combined work of Sweeping

People working in a particular group only clean the drainage and remove the wastage with the help of lorries. More than twelve people work in group. Three people are working as drainage cleaner, street cleaner and waste collector for two hundred and fifty houses.

Working time and Uniform of the Government Sweepers

The order about the government sweeper working time, uniform and leaves was declared through the collection on 27-2-76.

The sweepers working in the department of public cleanliness in the Municipality should work daily from morning 6 to 11 and 2 to 5 to protect clean liners of the town. The workers should appear at morning 6 o'clock and at evening 2 o'clock in the concerned department. The late comers will not be allowed to work.

All the sweepers should come in uniform. Those who don't come in uniform will also not be allowed to work. When the sweepers are to take leave in the near future, they should give the leave application which contains the reason, for which the sweeper takes leave, in advance. If they don't give the leave form, they won't be accepted for the job thereafter. The workers should be working time in the places that have been alerted to them.

Problems faced by Sanitary workers

The sanitary workers' dedication and commitment were very vulnerable. Sanitation work is a profession which involves the making of a clean and healthy surrounding. However there are a lot of issues and difficulties such as health and safety risks, financial challenges, lack of nutritious food and stigma due to the nature of their work and caste-based and gender-based discrimination. The problem of manual scavenging as it is commonly called, is not new and is deeply rooted in India's caste system, which assigns duties such as the cleaning of human faecal waste to people born in the lowest sub-castes of the Dalit community particularly from Chakkiliar community. Everyday they have to face the foul smell of the garbage. People look at them with disgust and also they consider them as backward community.

However, these practices continue both in rural and urban areas of Nagercoil, where men and women physically get inside sewer networks and septic tanks to clean blockages despite extreme hazards and risks. The statistics report shows that sanitation workers are at risk for a range of diseases including asthma, cholera, typhoid, hepatitis, polio, blunt trauma and gastroenteritis.

Female sanitation workers frequently faced more discrimination than others. They often receive significantly less pay than others or find themselves only able to work in waste collection.

The potential of contracting at work pushes many sanitation workers in Nagercoil Municipality sanitary male workers consume alcohol or drugs for comfort.

Conclusion

A Sanitation worker must be physically fit, so he can quickly climb in and out of large trucks and lift heavy trash containers. Sanitary workers help improve the cleanliness. Sanitary workers help improve the cleanliness of the environment and help people's better future. Sanitary workers strive their best to keep our surroundings clean and tidy. Their working conditions are rather intolerable. They work from dawn to dusk.

End Notes

- [1] G.O 237 M.A & WS election dated 26-09-1996. Record taken from Nagercoil Municipality
- [2] G.O. No.101, 30-04-97, Regional Director of Municipal Office, Tirunelveli
- [3] Record Number. 8907/87/H2,27-03-1987, Nagercoil Municipality,Nagercoil.
- [4] Gopalakrishna (Ed.) ‘Gazetteers of India’ Tamilnadu state, Kanyakumari District’1985
- [5] Manual of Municipal Service Rules’ Pudukottai,1990.
- [6] Personal Interview: C.Murugan, Sanitary supervisor, 6th division ,Nagercoil Municipality, dated on 01-09-09,15-04-09.
- [7] Personal Interview:S. RamaKrishnan (Assistant) Regional Director of Municipal Administration Office, Tirunelveli, dated on 15-12-2008.
- [8] Personal Interview: S.K.Chandran ‘ Sanitary Inspector, Nagercoil Municipality dated on 10-04-09.
- [9] Personal Interview:P.PeachiPappa, ‘Sanitary Worker’ 10th division, Nagercoil Municipality.
- [10] Personal Interview: S. Muthammal, ‘Sanitary Worker’6th Division, Nagercoil Municipality.
- [11] Personal Interview: T. Pallaiah, “Sanitary Worker, 8th Division, Nagercoil Municipality.