Urban Development and Metro Governance

K C SIVARAMAKRISHNAN

While the outcomes of the Lok Sabha and the state assembly elections have been well documented and analysed, little is known about the electoral geography in urban areas. In discussing the conflicting interests of local politics and urban development, this article places the definition and understanding of what is “urban” in the context of the 74th constitutional amendment, and also looks at the expectations from and the progress on the reforms agenda of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission. Further, the article addresses the high economic stakes and challenges involved in metro governance, while arguing that these cannot be dealt with under the general rubric of Union-State-Municipality. International experience is relevant in this regard not for the structural models followed, but because unlike in India, the subject of urban governance in most cities around the world has been a matter of serious debate and action.

The 2011 Census has indicated that compared to 1,363 in 2001, there are now 3,893 census towns which fulfil the normative criteria of a minimum population of 5,000, density of 400 persons per sq km and at least 75% of the male working force in occupations other than agriculture. It remains to be seen how many of these settlements are free standing and how many are a part of urban agglomerations or in the vicinity of large cities. Apart from census towns, there is also another category called statutory towns. These are towns which are declared to be urban under a state law, where a municipal or similar set-up is available.

This article attempts to traverse briefly the course of India’s understanding of what is urban. The electoral geography of our cities in the context of the 74th constitutional amendment and its outcome and implications for urban governance are important for a proper understanding of the issues. While a detailed review of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), by far the largest programme of government funding for urban development, is beyond the remit of this article, the scope and coverage are briefly discussed. The article also addresses the challenges of metro governance and the high economic stakes involved.

Under the 73rd and the 74th constitutional amendments, all settlements in the country excepting those in the tribal areas under Schedules V and VI of the Constitution are to be provided with a governance structure – panchayats for rural areas and municipalities for urban. Given the expectations from the 74th amendment to ensure a participative, functionally distinct and accountable structure of governance for urban areas, a brief discussion on this issue is necessary at this stage. As of now there are 139 municipal corporations, 1,595 municipalities and 2,108 nagar panchayats. Leaving aside nagar panchayats, the total number of 1,734 corporations and municipalities is still less than a quarter of the total number of 7,900 urban places. Thus all places which are labelled as urban are not municipal; conversely all places labelled as municipal may not be urban.

The Constitutional Context

The 73rd and the 74th amendments provided an opportunity for determining quantitative criteria for urban and rural settlements, but this opportunity was not used. The 62nd Amendment Bill which was the precursor to the 74th amendment did attempt a quantitative classification of nagar panchayats, municipalities and corporations. That attempt was given up. In what stands as the 74th amendment today, the criteria are expressed only in non-quantitative terms including density, employment, economic importance, etc. It describes the nagar panchayats as...
designed for settlements in transition from rural to urban, while a smaller municipality and a larger municipality are settlements so notified by the government. On the other hand, in the case of the 73rd amendment, the definition and identification of a village follows the long-established practice of land revenue departments of a state government which is not dependent on any demographic or economic criteria. The overall situation therefore is that all settlements in the country are rural except those which are declared to be urban. If so, there is a need to make the definition of the urban place more systematic and rigorous than what obtains today.

Between the 73rd and the 74th amendments, an elaborate structure for the panchayat and nagarpalika formations has been stipulated. In both cases, the composition is based on persons elected from single-member territorial constituencies on the basis of adult franchise. The panchayats being far more numerous, the total number of elected representatives from this stream is about 30 lakh. In the case of urban areas, the number of elected representatives from all the 3,842 urban local bodies (ULBs) will be about 40,000. This number of ULBs is far less than the number of urban places identified in the 2001 Census (5,161) or that in the 2011 Census (7,900). It is therefore clear that all settlements regarded as urban in the census are not “municipal”, at least in the constitutional sense. According to the compilation prepared on behalf of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, the average population size of a village panchayat is about 23,000 in Kerala, 10,000 in West Bengal and Assam, and varies between 5,000 and 10,000 in other states (IRMA 2008). There is little to distinguish these large-sized panchayats from the so-called urban places in the categories of class IV and below. These places will indeed be better off as panchayats since government funding and various other concessions available to panchayats are more in number and much larger.

Electoral Configuration

In considering the role of the elected representatives in the ULBs, the electoral scheme itself has to be adequately understood. While compliance with the constitutional provisions of the two amendments has been characterised by delays and distortions, the holding of elections mandated every five years and organised by the State Election Commissions have been more or less regular. A redeeming feature of the system is the reservation of one-third of the seats for women. In some states like Bihar and Kerala, this has been enhanced to one half. However, applying the reservation to Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and the rotation of the reserved constituencies has tended to fragment the electorate. It also renders the progressive development of local leadership through continuity of representing a given constituency difficult. Without going into the debate about how far the reservation system has empowered the vulnerable sections of the society, here we only consider the outcome of the local body elections.

In the initial phases of the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections during the period 1952-72, it was observed that the turnout in urban areas was more than in rural areas (Weiner 1976). After 1972, however, the position has changed. The turnout percentages in the urban areas have tended to fall behind national and state averages. Part of the reason could be that in the absence of the territorial adjustment of constituencies as stipulated in the Constitution, the population and electorates in urban constituencies increased significantly. When electorate sizes are different, voter turnout may seem low in large constituencies. The freeze on delimitation imposed by Indira Gandhi's omnibus 42nd amendment in 1976 resulted in many urban constituencies having a large electorate. Hugely populous constituencies like Thane and outer Delhi emerged, whose electorate was several times larger than the average. The delimitation of Lok Sabha and Assembly constituencies was revived after much effort and implemented in January 2008. Keeping the total number of Lok Sabha and Assembly seats the same as before – including their allocation to the different states – this 2008 delimitation has adjusted the boundaries of almost all constituencies, broadly maintaining parity in the population-seat ratio within a state (Alam 2010).

An interstate comparison of turnout for Assembly elections that were held during 2010 in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra indicates the average turnout in urban constituencies is about 10-17 percentage points less compared to that in the rural constituencies (Figure 1). It is only in Bihar that the turnout in urban constituencies was slightly more. In the case of the two large cities Bangalure and Hyderabad, where election to the city corporations were held in 2010, the turnout was as low as 42% and 44% respectively (Figure 2). It has been high only in
the case of Kolkata Corporation (62%). On the other hand, munici-

cipal corporation elections in Navi Mumbai, Jaipur, Ajmer,

Jodhpur and Kota in late 2010 experienced turnout percentages

ranging from 60% to 61% (Figure 2). Are we then to conclude

that the urban electorate continues to be disinclined in elections

and that the system itself may not be adequate to elicit the par-

ticipation of the citizens?

Electoral Outcome

In any case, the turnout percentage is only one indication of voter

interest in local body governance. Whether the interest lasts

beyond elections depends very much on the structure of govern-

ance in the municipal bodies and where executive authority

and accountability lie. As of now, corporations and municipal

councils are mainly deliberative. There is no uniform practice for

election of the mayor. In most states the mayor is elected for a

term ranging from one to five years, and in some cases for two

and a half years, as in Maharashtra. The election is by and from

amongst the elected councillors. In some states like Tamil Nadu,

Uttar Pradesh (UP), Madhya Pradesh (MP) and Rajasthan, the

voters directly elect the mayor. The standing committees usually

take decisions on different subjects, and have a longer term and

greater powers as compared to those of the mayor. West

Bengal and MP have a Mayor-in-Council or a President-in-Council

system where the mayor or the municipal president appoints a

group of councillors as members-in-charge of different subjects.

This is a version of the cabinet system which has been in vogue

for nearly a decade. In most cities, the executive authority of

the municipal body is the standing committee or the municipal

commissioner, who is an appointee of the state government. The

elected councillors or the mayor have very little authority or

executive responsibility. It is futile to ask for accountability when

there is no authority.

Structural reforms of municipal governments have been on

the anvil for several years. The central government has provided

model laws from time to time. Some state governments like

those of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, West Bengal and MP

have enacted comprehensive municipal laws with varying effect-

iveness. Part of the reason why these laws are not followed up

at the state level is because the municipal voice is still small and

muted. Even after the resumption of the delimitation process,

the urban areas in the states do not have adequate representa-

tion in the respective legislative assemblies. Of the total number

of 3,988 constituenies in the various assemblies, the number of

urban assembly constituencies (whose population is at least

50% urban) may be about 850 or less. For instance, in the case

of Maharashtra where the level of urbanisation is 42% (2001),

the share of urban constituencies in the Assembly is only 35%.

Similar is the case with Tamil Nadu whose level of urbanisation

is about the same. This is partly explained by the fact that the

Delimitation Commission, in redrawing the boundaries of

Assembly constituencies, did not use municipal or panchayat

formations as the building blocks. Many constituencies are

therefore mixed.

For municipalities and panchayats, a similar delimitation of

constituencies is undertaken by the State Election Commissions.

Here again, the broad principle of parity in the population-seat

ratio is sought to be maintained within the state, although

differences do persist. Furthermore, unlike the Parliament and

the State Assemblies where the total number of seats and their

allocation are determined by the 42nd amendment and will remain

so until 2026, the number of seats in a municipal corporation or a

municipality is determined by the state government. There is significant variation within

and between the states. For instance, in Mumbai there is one

councillor for about 52,000 people; in Bangalore, the corres-

ponding number is 42,000 and in Kolkata it is 23,000. When-

ever a state government decides to increase the number of

wards, the seat-population ratio decreases. For instance, when

the Delhi government increased the number from 141 to 272, the

seat population ratio was halved, even though it is still 36,000

people per ward.

Another common view is that city elections will be fought on

the basis of city-based issues. The reality is that these elections

are also dominated by the political agenda pursued at the state

level. In most states, local body elections are fought on party basis.

UP tries to maintain the illusion of a party-less election by stipu-

lating that political parties will not field candidates in panchayat

elections. There is no evidence to suggest that this has resulted in

less politicisation. Caste and communal issues are used as a sur-

rogate for political contest. Manifestos for local body elections

are rare. The few that are produced are repetitive of state-level

party documents. In the elections to the Hyderabad Municipal

Corporation, the Lok Satta Party – a new entrant to the scene –

was the only one which formulated a specific agenda for the

Hyderabad city. Its candidates were chosen through a special

process of community endorsement. The party contested all the

seats but did not win a single seat.

Recent Assembly elections in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and

Kerala dramatically highlighted how state political agenda

crowds out local agenda. In West Bengal, when municipal elec-

tions for several places (including Kolkata) were held in 2005,

52% of the vote share went to the Left Front, leaving only 25% for

the Trinamool Congress. But in the municipal elections held five

years later in 2010, the Left Front could muster only 37% of the

vote share leaving 48% for the Trinamool. In the 2011 Assembly

elections, the vote share differences between the parties have not

been very high. Yet, because of a higher turnout in many constit-

uencies, and also because of the Trinamool wave as such, the Left

Front lost the Assembly seats in many urban areas where they

had won the municipal seats only a few months earlier. Kerala

experienced the same phenomenon, with its municipal elections

being held only a few months before. In the case of Tamil Nadu

however, no comparisons can be made since there have been no

municipal elections of significance during the past two years.

Apart from the state political agenda dominating local body elec-
tions, in the running of most cities, there is a significant intrusion

of the Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and Members of

Parliament (MP) including their membership as nominees with

voting rights. This intrusion has been further sanctified by the

Supreme Court’s ruling that the MP-Local Area Development

Scheme (MP-LADS) is constitutionally valid.
REVIEW OF URBAN AFFAIRS

National Urban Renewal Mission: Whither Reforms?
While launching the JNNURM, the prime minister had declared that it would be a city-based programme. He emphasised that governance-related reforms would be an important part of the programme and financial assistance would be contingent on the fulfilment of these reforms. The Mission has four components. The first is Urban Infrastructure and Governance (UIG) for 65 cities, comprising the mega cities of Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Delhi and Ahmedabad, 28 cities with a population of one million plus, 17 state capitals, and 13 cities of religious and tourist importance. The second component is the Urban Infrastructure Development Scheme for Small and Medium Towns (UIDSSMT) which covers 640 towns. The third component is the Basic Services for Urban Poor which extends to all the 65 towns identified for the UIG component. The fourth is the Integrated Housing and Slum Development Programme. All the four components share some common features such as the provision of basic infrastructure, i.e., water supply and sanitation (GOI 2005). All components emphasise inclusive growth and adequate response to the needs of the poor. The total project cost for all the components together was about Rs 1,00,000 crore, of which 50% was to be provided as central assistance.

Initially, it was expected that access to the Mission funds would be performance-oriented and competitive in nature. But eventually, the time-honoured practice of pleasing everyone prevailed in all the government programmes. Additionally, two other criteria were applied for accessing the funds. One was the urban population of the states and its proportion to the urban population in the country. The second was the so-called ceiling for the states within which the JNNURM assistance had to be accommodated. Inevitably, these two postulates resulted in the larger states and larger cities getting more of the allocation. Though many of the larger states such as Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh or Tamil Nadu are better off, their share has been as high as 95%. The smaller states received only 3% and the remaining 2% went to the union territories. To illustrate, since the inception of the JNNURM, the central share allocation under the UIG component has been about Rs 1,846 crore for Greater Mumbai, Rs 1,525 crore for Kolkata, Rs 1,567 crore for Pune, and Rs 1,404 crore for Chennai. The allocation for Delhi has been the largest at Rs 2,500 crore. In these circumstances, the JNNURM has ceased to be a need-based programme, and is not based on any assessment on whether central assistance would be more effective in some cities rather than in others.

The organising principle of the JNNURM was the full involvement of the elected ULBs. However, in actual practice, the dis-connect between various activities of the Mission and the ULBs has been pervasive. Right from the preparation of the city development plans, which was the starting point of the Mission, the involvement of the local bodies has been marginal. The concerned departments of the state government or the agency designated as the nodal body determined the selection of projects and the financing arrangements. The responsibility for the execution of many of the projects lies with parastatal agencies. There are,
of course, some exceptions in the case of large corporations such as Mumbai, Pune, Hyderabad, Kolkata, etc. The UGC Mission guidelines do provide that whatever be the arrangements for project implementation, an accountability platform under the urban local body should be set up, to which the implementing agencies would report. There is no evidence to show that this has been done. The monitoring of project execution and the reporting on various parameters determined by the government are also the responsibility of the state nodal agency.

Since the Mission has been considered reform-based and reform-contingent, a tripartite memorandum of understanding was entered into between the central government, the state government and the ULB concerned. The reforms identified vary widely from the abolition of the Rent Control Acts to modification of stamp duties, new laws to enable community participation, public disclosure regime, better property tax management, devolution of functions to local bodies, etc. Performance reviews of the Mission reveal that progress on the reforms has been least satisfactory. The Planning Commission itself has clearly stated in its mid-term appraisal that monitoring of the progress on the reforms agenda has largely been a box-filling exercise (GOI 2010).

The commitment and interest in pursuing the reforms agenda is not strong so far as ULBs are concerned. This is because their functional and financial domain has been steadily eroded over time. The 11th and 12th schedules of the Constitution, which lists the subjects pertaining to panchayats and municipalities, are not very different. Yet, neither of these schedules is a mandatory list. It is entirely up to the state governments to decide what functions pertaining to these subjects should be devolved on the ULBs and in what manner functionaries and funds needed for these should be provided. It has been argued in many state high courts as well as in the Supreme Court that treating such an assignment as entirely a matter of discretion goes against the spirit and intent of the constitutional amendments and renders them no non-justiciable. The courts, however, have declared, in the words of one of the chief justices, “in pronouncing the constitutional validity of a statute, the court is not concerned with the wisdom or unwisdom, the justness or otherwise of the state law in regard to the devolution of functions and powers to local bodies.” This stand is endorsed by most state governments, which from upon the constitutional status of the panchayats and nagarpalikas as an encroachment of their jurisdiction. What is left, therefore, is the shell with all its trappings of elections and committees. The question is whether we need so many empty shells and whether they need further adornment under the JNNURM. It may well be argued that JNNURM is work in progress and it is too early to give a verdict on its outcome. Viewed against the declared objective of enabling cities to take charge of their destinies, there is certainly very little to show.

Planning of Metro Cities
A metropolitan city, by its very nature and definition, is an area of multiple polities. It is an economic entity which straddles many administrative jurisdictions and has many regional, national and global linkages. It is not easy to compile and aggregate statistical information pertaining to metropolitan economies. However, rough estimates for 2007-08 indicate that each of the six large metropolitan areas, i.e., Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Chennai and Bangalore yield a gross domestic product (GDP) ranging from Rs 20,000 crore to Rs 1,14,000 crore. Together they account for at least 10% of the country’s GDP. Their economic character has also been changing in recent years. Manufacturing has a less dominant role – it is services, trade and construction which are picking up. This changing character also means that the economies of the cities are not dependent only on what happens within their respective states. They need much more connectivity with the rest of the country and the world. They also need investment from national and global sources. Importantly, manpower skills available within the metropolitan area itself have to be supplemented with what is drawn from across the country. Mumbai is as much the product of investment and workforce from across the country as from within Maharashtra. So it is in Bangalore, Chennai, or Hyderabad. Cities, as Glaeser (2011) reminds us, exist and thrive because of their connectivity. That singular merit is compromised if the state or the country raises barriers to entry.

That leads us to the question: How “global” are our metropolitan cities? There is no universally agreed definition of a global city. While governments and other organisations often use expressions like “world-class city” to promote the image of a city, scholars apply different criteria to measure the global status of a city. Apart from the size of the economy, the nature of the economic activity in a given city and its relationship to the world economy is the more commonly followed measure. The Brookings – LSE Global Metro-Monitor 2010 tracks 150 cities across the world whose population totals 800 million and which account for 46% of the global GDP. According to the Metro-Monitor, it is the metropolitan areas in Asia and Latin America, in particular, in the so-called low income countries, which are leading the recovery from global recession. Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad and Kolkata are among the top 20 performers in this regard. Scholars also emphasise that in the structuring of global processes the role of the nation state has become ambiguous, resulting in the formation of a global market for capital, a global trade regime and the internationalisation of manufacturing production (Sassen 2010). Castells (2002) urges the exploration of the relationship between the local and the global on the one hand, and the connection among certain dimensions of identity and the functionality as they impinge on spatial forms. To him, the global city is emerging from a networking process operating through information technology.

Planning for metropolitan cities in the context of the region and the economy is not alien to Indian professionals. The very first major effort in large city planning undertaken in the 1950s for Delhi clearly recognised that part of Delhi’s problems had to be addressed in the region. The National Capital Region was one of the first attempts to delineate a larger region within which a metro core and surrounding cities can be planned and built (Sivaramakrishnan 1978). The Basic Development Plan for Kolkata put together by a team of national and international professionals of high repute as early as 1966 spelt out the linkages
between the city of Kolkata and its region, not limited to West Bengal, but stretching towards Bihar and Orissa. The Maharashtra Regional Town and Country Planning Act was one of the most comprehensive to be enacted in a developing country, which provided for integrating regional and city planning efforts. By then, Navi Mumbai started taking shape as an alternative node in the Bombay region. The Bombay Metropolitan Region’s delineation followed soon after. In Chennai, again the regional approach was emphasised with development plans for the core and a few satellite cities.

These initiatives were based on a sharing of knowledge and experience among professionals and bureaucrats from within the country and drawing upon international experience. The state political leaders also recognised the limits to the traditional municipal domain. However, the organisations specially created for formulating and sustaining a metropolitan-wide development strategy steadily succumbed to the temptation of projects. The Delhi Development Authority rapidly changed character and became a real estate developer and house builder. In Kolkata, after the initial efforts of coordinating and supporting existing agencies, the Development Authority began to take them over one after another. In Mumbai, despite opposition from the city corporation, the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) took on project responsibilities and acquired significant financial clout from money-spinning projects like the Bandra-Kurla complex. The same story was repeated in Chennai and Bangalore. The recommendation for a Metropolitan Planning Committee (MPC) under Article 243 ZE in the 74th amendment bringing together the elected representatives from these multiple jurisdictions along with professionals and government officials has been largely ignored.

Prima facie, compliance with an Article of the Constitution is an obligation and should not require a contractual stipulation or monetary inducement. The terms of reference are no encroachment on the domain of the states. They specifically refer to “matters of common interest between the municipalities and the panchayats, including coordinated spatial planning of the area, sharing of water and other physical and natural resources, the integrated development of infrastructure and environmental conservation”. These terms can only help start a serious metropolitan-wide planning process. As for composition, the state government decides the total size of the MPC, though two-thirds of the members are to be elected from among the members of the municipalities and panchayats within the metropolitan area. The remaining one-third is left to be determined by the state government, which can bring in professionals as well as representatives of trade and industry who in the normal course of events are kept out of such committees. The representation of the central government has to be at a level where effective involvement and participation is secured rather than have an official of a central government agency as a pro forma representative.

The Politics of Metro Governance

The concerned states and cities have dragged their feet or circumvented the constitutional stipulations to establish the MPC. Kolkata, though the first to set up such an MPC has allowed that body to be marginalised, while the focus of the Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority (KMDA) continues to be on projects and works. The much lamented Tata project in Singur located at the edge of the metropolitan area did not even figure in any of the MPC discussions. After repeated plodding and several failed commitments in the high court, Maharashtra eventually set up an MPC for Mumbai, Pune and Nagpur. This MPC is remarkable for its significant disconnect with the Regional Development Authority which has carried on with its own exercise on the future of the Mumbai region. Hyderabad passed an enabling law as a repeat of the provisions of Article 243 ZE to set up an MPC but in parallel also set up a highly powerful MDA dominated by state ministers and officials, again significantly disconnected from the MPC. In the meantime, the Telangana controversy has overtaken the process as the fate of Hyderabad hangs in the balance. Bangalore spent much time and effort with expert committees advising appropriate compliance with Article 243 ZE and is still struggling to bring about the necessary law for the purpose as the Karnataka Legislature lurks from one fractious session to another. Chennai has not paid any attention to the constitutional requirement and matters remain very much in the pre-74th amendment.

In essence, the problems are political – of inadequate understanding of metropolitan complexities, fear of losing control, and inability to consider alternatives to hierarchical structures. While most chief ministers enjoy the worldwide attention which their metropolitan cities receive, they still consider them as falling exclusively within their domain. The dynamism of persons like B C Roy, S M Krishna and Chandrababu Naidu helped project Kolkata, Bangalore and Hyderabad on the global stage. But metro cities are a diverse political mosaic with numerous stakes and challenges. Even the most competent chief minister cannot perform for long the dual role of leading the state and also heading its principal city. Besides, the chief minister may be an exalted person but there are many others occupying the political turf. Mumbai has nine MPs, 54 MLAs and about 1,200 councillors from the numerous local bodies. Kolkata has 10 MPs, 60 MLAs and several hundred councillors; and Hyderabad has four MPs, 28 MLAs and 150 corporators.

Devising a governance structure which accommodates the views of various political persons regarding the strategy for the development of the city is a challenge. Unfortunately, in India there has been hardly any debate on how to address this issue. Proposals for a directly elected mayor (even for the core city) who will have authority and accountability are ignored because
the state leadership fears this as a potential threat. Granted that Maharashtra and Kerala or Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have high stakes in their capital cities but so do various others including the wide range of investors, domestic or foreign, the industry, the numerous institutions with a national and often international coverage or the central government. The simple construct of “Union-State-Municipality” is just not adequate for metro cities which are intergovernmental entities. This is not to say that every metropolitan city should become a union territory. It is not claimed that the union government is cerebrally more capable of administering such a territory. What these areas need is a structure headed by a person whose locus and focus will be the metropolitan areas and not something else.

To elaborate further on the argument, take the example of Delhi. It is no longer a union territory; it is a state with its own legislature with as many as 70 members. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi now has 272 members as compared to 141 before. The union government itself is not entirely out of the picture. Most of the activities carried out in Delhi fall within the domain of the Delhi government, though law and order and land are still handled by the lieutenant governor on behalf of the union government. Nevertheless, there is no doubt in the public mind that Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit is the head of the Delhi government. Though there is a municipal corporation with a largely ceremonial mayor elected for a year, it is the chief minister who is the de facto and de jure political head of Delhi. In that capacity she receives more than her share of bouquets and brickbats. This is as it should be. Many changes are urgently required in making the structure of the Delhi government more efficient and responsive. It is also true, as the nation’s capital it receives more than its share of largesse from the government. As a city-state, it has many hybrid characteristics of a city, a state and a country. Both Delhi and Dikshit are clearly identifiable in the public mind. Unfortunately, that cannot be said of the other metro cities in the country. One cannot even recall the name of the mayor of Kolkata, Bangalore or Mumbai.

International Experience

Across the world, metropolitan cities have laboured hard to arrive at a reasonable scheme of governance. A two-tier arrangement for the metropolitan area, whether elective or otherwise, prevails in Mexico, Seoul and Greater London. Tokyo has moved from a two-tier to a single-tier system. Beijing, Shanghai, and Tianjin have a unified metropolitan government which is accorded a provincial status. Berlin also has the status of a city state (Slack 2007). Metropolitan-wide inter-municipal authorities or special purpose districts as they are called, are found in extremely fragmented municipal situations of the us such as Los Angeles or Chicago. The New York Metropolitan Area is divided among the states of New Jersey, New York and Connecticut, several counties and cities and towns still manage to secure its transport, energy, water and environmental systems in functioning order by a combination of regional agreements some of which as in transport are encouraged by federal legislation. The New York Regional Plan Association, a non-governmental organisation, has been quite effective in bringing the seemingly warring jurisdictions of the metropolitan area to a common purpose and pursuit in regard to some subjects. There are other arrangements of voluntary cooperation through inter-municipal agreements as in Sao Paulo and some other cities in North and South America.

Despite all the studies and discussion on metro cities, mega cities or national cities, it is unfortunate that in the country the political spectrum as such has not really given any serious consideration to the subject. Metro cities receive attention only when there is a crisis of some kind such as communal riots, terrorist strikes, anti-migrant agitations or a controversy like Telangana with Hyderabad as a bone of contention. At the time of the creation of Maharashtra and Gujarat, the city of Bombay was at the heart of the controversy. These metro cities are worth fighting for because of the size of their economy, the strength of their varied society and their role as gateways to the world. Their governance system has to tackle several kinds of metropolitan vs local conflicts. Professionals can suggest alternatives but choices to be made will be political. In the Indian context these choices will often require working both with the states and against the State (Maringanti 2010). Elsewhere in the world, in London, New York, Toronto, Tokyo, Shanghai or Seoul, professionals, business groups and politicians have striven hard to find answers. Unfortunately, in India, thinking on the subject has been sterile and the stalemate continues.