

City Administration in India

Evolution, Urban Governance Challenges, and Administrative Reforms

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Abstract

City administration in India has undergone significant transformation following the enactment of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, which conferred constitutional status on Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and sought to strengthen democratic decentralization in urban governance. Despite these reforms, rapid urbanization, population growth, territorial expansion of metropolitan regions, and increasing demand for public services have exposed persistent institutional and administrative weaknesses. Large metropolitan cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, and Kolkata continue to face complex challenges including inadequate infrastructure, traffic congestion, housing shortages, environmental degradation, slum proliferation, financial constraints, fragmented governance, and overlapping administrative jurisdictions.

The paper examines the evolution of city administration in India by analyzing the constitutional framework, historical development of municipal governance, trends in urbanization, and the structural limitations of existing municipal institutions. It further evaluates the implications of metropolitan expansion with particular reference to the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) and discusses the need for integrated metropolitan governance, stronger decentralization, empowered local leadership, and improved coordination among municipal, revenue, planning, and law enforcement agencies. Drawing upon the recommendations of the Second Administrative Reforms Commission, the paper proposes a multi-tier administrative structure emphasizing directly elected leadership, functional decentralization, accountable governance, and enhanced citizen participation. The study concludes that sustainable urban development in India requires comprehensive institutional reforms, greater fiscal autonomy for Urban Local Bodies, adoption of smart governance practices, and strengthened metropolitan planning to address the emerging challenges of twenty-first century urbanization.

Keywords: City Administration, Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), Municipal Corporation, 74th Constitutional Amendment, Urban Governance, Metropolitan Administration, Smart Cities, Decentralization, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC), Urban Planning, Local Self-Government, Sustainable Urban Development.

1. Introduction

Urbanization has become one of the most significant drivers of economic growth, social transformation, and administrative reforms across the world. Cities serve as centres of industrial production, commerce, education, healthcare, technological innovation, and public administration. In India, rapid urban expansion has generated enormous opportunities for economic development while simultaneously creating complex governance challenges related to infrastructure, housing, transportation, sanitation, environmental sustainability, and public service delivery. Consequently, city administration has emerged as a critical area of public administration that determines the quality of urban governance and the overall standard of living of urban residents. Effective municipal governance is therefore essential for achieving sustainable, inclusive, and resilient urban development in India [3].

India has a rich historical tradition of urban governance dating back to the Indus Valley Civilization, where planned settlements exhibited

advanced systems of drainage, water management, and civic administration. During the British period, the modern municipal system gradually evolved through legislative and administrative reforms. Lord Ripon's Resolution of 1882 is widely regarded as the foundation of local self-government in India because it emphasized decentralization, public participation, and representative municipal institutions. Although municipal bodies functioned under colonial control, they established the institutional framework for modern urban administration in independent India [1].

Following Independence, urban local bodies continued to function under the authority of State Governments with limited financial and administrative autonomy. Frequent dissolution of municipal councils, irregular elections, inadequate financial resources, and excessive governmental control weakened the effectiveness of city administration. Recognizing these institutional deficiencies, the Government of India enacted the Constitution (Seventy-Fourth Amendment) Act,

1992, which came into force in 1993. The Amendment granted constitutional status to Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), introduced democratic decentralization, provided for regular municipal elections, reservation of seats for disadvantaged groups, constitution of Ward Committees, Metropolitan Planning Committees, and State Finance Commissions, besides assigning eighteen municipal functions under the Twelfth Schedule of the Constitution [9].

The constitutional reforms significantly strengthened the legal foundation of urban governance; however, their implementation has varied considerably among Indian states. Although municipalities have acquired greater democratic legitimacy, they continue to face several structural challenges, including inadequate fiscal autonomy, shortage of technical personnel, overlapping administrative jurisdictions, weak institutional coordination, and dependence on State Governments for financial assistance and policy decisions. These challenges have limited the ability of Urban Local Bodies to respond effectively to rapidly increasing urban populations and expanding metropolitan regions [12].

India is presently experiencing one of the fastest urban transitions in the world. According to the Census of India 2011, more than 31 percent of the country's population resided in urban areas, and subsequent estimates indicate a continuous increase in urban migration and metropolitan expansion. The United Nations projects that India will account for a substantial share of global urban population growth by 2050, making efficient city administration essential for sustaining economic development, improving infrastructure, and maintaining environmental balance. This demographic transformation has significantly increased the demand for better governance, integrated urban planning, and improved municipal service delivery [12].

Large metropolitan cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, Kolkata, and Hyderabad have emerged as major economic centres contributing significantly to India's Gross Domestic Product. However, these cities also experience severe traffic congestion, housing shortages, inadequate public transportation, environmental degradation, waste management problems, water scarcity, and growing informal settlements. Administrative fragmentation among municipal corporations, development authorities, transport agencies, revenue departments, and police organizations frequently results in duplication of responsibilities and delays in implementing development projects. These institutional complexities require stronger metropolitan governance supported by effective coordination among multiple agencies [14].

Recognizing these challenges, the Government of India has launched several urban development programmes, including the Smart Cities Mission, Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban), Digital India, and PM e-Bus initiatives. These programmes encourage municipalities to adopt digital governance, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Integrated Command and Control Centres (ICCCs), e-governance platforms, intelligent transport systems, and citizen-centric service delivery mechanisms. While these initiatives have improved governance in several cities, disparities in institutional capacity, financial resources, and technological readiness continue to hinder uniform implementation across Urban Local Bodies [14].

Recent studies on urban governance emphasize that sustainable city administration requires stronger fiscal decentralization, institutional accountability, integrated metropolitan planning, environmental resilience, and active citizen participation. International organizations have highlighted the importance of coordinated governance mechanisms capable of addressing climate change, disaster management, smart infrastructure, municipal finance, and inclusive urban development. These recommendations indicate that future urban governance in India should move beyond traditional municipal administration toward integrated metropolitan governance supported by empowered local institutions and evidence-based policy making [24].

The present study examines the evolution, constitutional framework, organizational structure, and contemporary challenges of city administration in India. It analyses the impact of rapid urbanization on municipal governance, evaluates the effectiveness of existing institutional arrangements, and explores the need for administrative restructuring to improve accountability, decentralization, service delivery, and citizen participation. The study also discusses the emerging role of metropolitan governance in promoting sustainable urban development and enhancing the efficiency of Urban Local Bodies in the changing socio-economic environment [6], [7], [8].

2. Literature Review

The evolution of city administration in India has attracted considerable attention from scholars of public administration, urban planning, and governance. Earlier studies primarily examined the legal and institutional framework of municipal administration, while recent research has focused on decentralization, metropolitan governance, smart cities, financial sustainability, and citizen participation. The literature indicates that although constitutional reforms have strengthened Urban

Local Bodies (ULBs), significant challenges remain in terms of institutional capacity, fiscal autonomy, coordination among agencies, and service delivery. Avasthi [1] presented one of the earliest comprehensive analyses of municipal administration in India. The study traced the historical evolution of local self-government from the colonial period to post-independence India and highlighted the significance of Lord Ripon's Resolution of 1882 in establishing representative municipal institutions. The author argued that municipalities should function as democratic institutions capable of delivering essential civic services through public participation and administrative accountability. However, excessive governmental control and inadequate financial resources were identified as major obstacles to effective urban governance.

Bhattacharya [2] examined the administrative and managerial dimensions of urban local government in India. The study emphasized that municipal administration should not merely perform regulatory functions but should also serve as an institution for local development. According to the author, increasing urban populations require professionally managed municipal organizations equipped with qualified personnel, scientific planning methods, and effective financial management systems. The study further observed that administrative efficiency depends largely on coordination between elected representatives and municipal executives.

Maheshwari [3] analyzed Indian administration from the perspective of constitutional governance and public administration. The author explained that municipal institutions constitute an integral component of India's democratic framework and emphasized the importance of decentralization for improving administrative responsiveness. The study argued that Urban Local Bodies continue to remain financially and administratively dependent on State Governments despite constitutional recognition. The author suggested greater devolution of powers, fiscal decentralization, and institutional strengthening to improve municipal governance.

Sachdeva [4] extensively discussed the structure, functions, and constitutional status of local government institutions after the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments. The study observed that constitutional recognition significantly enhanced the democratic legitimacy of municipalities by ensuring regular elections, reservation of seats, and decentralized planning. Nevertheless, the author noted that actual transfer of functions and financial authority remained uneven across different states, thereby limiting the effectiveness of Urban Local Bodies in addressing local developmental needs.

Mohanty [6] emphasized the importance of citizen participation and institutional accountability in

municipal governance. The author argued that urban governance should move beyond routine civic administration and adopt participatory approaches involving residents, civil society organizations, and local stakeholders in planning and implementation processes. The study identified transparency, public consultation, financial accountability, and decentralized decision-making as essential components of effective city administration capable of improving public trust and service delivery.

The Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) [12] provided one of the most comprehensive assessments of urban governance in India. The Commission observed that municipal institutions suffer from fragmented authority, inadequate financial resources, weak professional capacity, and overlapping administrative jurisdictions. It recommended direct election of mayors in metropolitan cities, strengthening Ward Committees and Area Sabhas, enhancing municipal finances, improving metropolitan planning, and promoting greater administrative accountability. Many of these recommendations continue to influence debates on urban governance reforms.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) [13] highlighted recent trends in urbanization through the *Handbook of Urban Statistics*. The report documented significant increases in urban population, municipal expenditure, housing demand, transportation requirements, and infrastructure investments across Indian cities. It emphasized that metropolitan regions require integrated planning, sustainable infrastructure, efficient municipal finance, and digital governance systems to manage rapid urban growth effectively. The report also underscored the growing importance of data-driven policy formulation for urban administration.

The Smart Cities Mission Annual Report published by MoHUA [14] examined the implementation of technology-enabled governance in Indian cities. The report demonstrated that digital governance platforms, Integrated Command and Control Centres (ICCCs), Geographic Information Systems (GIS), intelligent transportation systems, online grievance redressal mechanisms, and smart utility management have improved administrative efficiency and citizen services in several municipalities. However, disparities in financial capacity, technological infrastructure, and institutional readiness continue to affect implementation across cities.

Jha [16] critically analyzed the evolution of urban local governance in India and argued that constitutional decentralization has not always translated into genuine administrative empowerment. The study highlighted persistent dependence of municipalities on State Governments for financial transfers, administrative approvals, and

policy implementation. It further observed that metropolitan governance requires stronger institutional coordination among municipal corporations, planning authorities, transport agencies, and district administrations to improve efficiency and accountability.

The World Bank [23] focused on municipal finance as the foundation of sustainable urban governance. The report emphasized that financially empowered municipalities are better positioned to provide quality public services, maintain infrastructure, and undertake long-term development projects. It recommended reforms in property taxation, user charges, municipal bonds, financial transparency, and public-private partnerships to strengthen the financial sustainability of Urban Local Bodies and reduce dependence on state governments.

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) [22] examined global trends in urbanization and sustainable city development. The report emphasized that climate change, environmental degradation, urban inequality, and rapid population growth present major governance challenges for cities across developing countries. It advocated integrated urban planning, resilient infrastructure, environmentally sustainable policies, and inclusive governance models that promote equitable access to public services while enhancing urban resilience against future risks.

The OECD [24] reviewed India's urban governance framework from an international perspective. The report concluded that fragmented institutional arrangements, overlapping administrative jurisdictions, limited fiscal autonomy, and inadequate metropolitan coordination continue to affect the performance of Urban Local Bodies. It recommended integrated metropolitan governance, evidence-based policymaking, performance-oriented municipal administration, enhanced fiscal decentralization, and greater citizen participation to improve urban governance outcomes. The report also stressed that sustainable city administration requires strong coordination among municipal institutions, planning authorities, transport agencies, environmental regulators, and digital governance platforms.

Research Gap

The existing literature demonstrates that considerable progress has been achieved in strengthening municipal institutions following the 74th Constitutional Amendment. Nevertheless, most previous studies have concentrated on constitutional provisions, municipal finance, decentralization, smart city initiatives, or individual governance reforms. Comparatively fewer studies comprehensively examine the combined impact of rapid metropolitan expansion, institutional fragmentation, overlapping jurisdictions,

administrative coordination, and governance efficiency within large Indian metropolitan regions. Furthermore, limited attention has been given to proposing an integrated administrative framework capable of improving coordination among municipal corporations, metropolitan development authorities, district administrations, and citizen institutions. The present study addresses this gap by critically examining the evolution of city administration in India and proposing institutional reforms for strengthening metropolitan governance, decentralized administration, and sustainable urban development.

3. City Administration In India

Cities – Trends and Challenges

After the implementation of the 74th Constitutional law, it was felt that Cities are unable to settle the problems of the people's due to rapidly spanning area's and their problems can't be solved immediately. Fact was that cities are tools of earning not only for poor even for a common man.

Problems were severe and resource are meager. Hence City Administration was in poor Condition. For example Hyderabad has an Area of 2053 KiloMeters. Whereas Hyderabad Metropolitan Area has 7,257 Kilo Meters, and Hyderabad Metropolitan has an Area of 10,472 Squire Kilo Meters. But Hyderabad District is consists of just 217 Kilo Meters.

Warangal is the Second Largest City of Telangana. On the other hand Mumbai has an Area of 603.4 Kilo Meter area divided in 2 branches. Thus Mumbai has the largest Municipality with a combined income of 310 Billion Dollar equivalent to 43,159.40 Crore Rupees.

Combined Area of Hyderabad Municipality with an Area of 625 Squire Kilometers. In 2011 population of Hyderabad was just 10 Millions, but present population is 11.6 Millions.

In 1961 Commissioner of Census Ashok Mitra had defined the City "Where population is Five thousand and density of population is 400 persons, and where 75 percent people are engaged in agriculture" be called a city. It is expected that in another few years India's Net National Product would be produced a minimum 75 to 80 percent products, though even today over 50% population has no facility of toilets and over 65% population has no facility of sewerage, and over 40% waste has no dumping places.

India has a long history of local Government, but in the year 1882 it was Lord Rippon who initiated through a Resolution making India on the new style. With the Rippon's efforts British Government initiated to create a local Government through the State Governments.

Independent India in the year 1992, through a Constitutional Amendment created a city

administration, and created city Administration, named Municipal Administration, Municipal Council and Nagar Panchayats. These institutions were given all Powers to the new institutions. Presently new India has emerged with Mega Cities. Now India has 6 Mega Cities.

City	Population
Delhi	33.8 Million
Mumbai	21.6 Million
Kolkatta	15 Million
Bengaluru	14 Million
Chennai	12 Million
Hyderabad	11 Million

These Cities has been recognized by the United Nations as City Conglomerates, having a population of 10 Millions.

Most of the States have large Area and populations. But these States have less resources, and administrative lapses. Thus Indian States are converting into the big Slums. According to the 2011 Census out of 65.5 Million peoples, 17.4 Million were living in utter Slums. In Mumbai alone 41.3 percent population was living in poverty.

According to this report World's 55 percent population would be living in cities. By 2050, population will increased to 68 percent. By 2050 Population of India, China, and Nigerian population would be living in the above cities. Ninety percent population would be increased in the Continent of Asia and Africa. In the year 1950 city population increased from 751 Million to 4.2 billion in the year 2018. In other words out of 6 person, one Indian would be living in Slums. In other words over 55 percent population of Mumbai's and 30 percent population was living in Slums.

Increase in the population and Cities development go hand in hand. UN's Department of Socio and Economic affairs has concluded that in 2018 reviewed report with the title "Possibility of World City" would enough to open the eyes of the world community.

Situation of population would be increased with rapid particularly in India. In 1901, 11 percent united India's population was living in cities. But today's scenario is much different. According to 2011 census 31.16 percent population was living in cities, means some 377.93 Million population was living in Cities.⁷ Whereas by 2020 population living in Cities was more than 48 Crores.

On the other hand in the year 1901, 2000 cities were in undivided India. On the other hand in the year 2001 Indian cities strength was 4500. During the year 2011 cities strength rised to 7935, out of which were 468 cities were first category cities, out of which 53 cities had a population of one million (10 lakh) which was equal to 42.63. First category cities had a total population of 70.2 percent.

According to Second ARC Report:

- Town Panchayats – 2433

- Municipal Councils – 1552
- City Municipal Councils – 366
- Municipal Corporations – 21
- Metropolitan Corporations – 6 only

(Second ARC Report, 2006)

People are continuously shifting from villages to Cities, resulting city population is increasing in the cities. Possibility is that world village population would decrease. By 2050, 68 percent population would be in cities, and just 3.1 million population living in villages.

This Urbanisation trend has created severe problems for the Planning Commission. In the 12th Five Year Plan it was decided to give a title "Challenges for Cities in India" and wrote about the challenges in future. Planning Commission observed that "If proper arrangements were not done, India's population not only increased rapidly and it would be a burden on the whole System, otherwise, not only City Centers would be increased but also geographic bodies also increased."

Presently all increasing geographic entities also connecting rapidly. Moreover Governments also providing structures rapidly to serve the needs of population and creating Urban Development Authorities. Now City Administrations are looking for an UDA. Still, Municipal Administration has failed to provide the needed facilities to Common persons. All Municipal Administrations failed to provide the needs to the commoners. All Municipal Administrations are considering to evolve themselves into a UDAs.

Seeing the present scenario, Planning Commission has decided to take steps by 2050, to create bigger Municipal Authorities. Planning Commission stresses a need to change the Planning to tackle the needs of the people and requirement. For example in Europe and America there is a System of Mayor with full power and Authority and is responsible for his efforts. In India there are 23 Metropolitan cities. They needed change in their efforts and capabilities. After the 74th Constitutional Amendment in the year 2005 Mr. Veerappa Moily and Administrative Reforms Commission suggested in it's 6th and 12th report for changes in the functioning of ULBs. Administrative Reforms Commission suggested 125 Recommendations. But no recommendation was accepted due to States were not in favour of changes.

Better City Administration – Problems and Challenges

Even After 74th Constitutional Amendment and after over two decade it was felt that, city Administration has failed to cater the problems of citizens, though the process of citizens problems have not reduced. Though the City Government has increased it jurisdiction, still Cities Administration has not enough powers to tackle the issues and

problems. Thus city Administration not able to tackle it's issues.

If we talk about Hyderabad City, Hyderabad City has increased it's Area to the extent of 650 Squire Kilometers, under the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Jurisdiction (GHMC), with a population of over 10 Millions.

During the last century of 80's, Cities of big Corporations began to form UDAs. But now this trend has reduced by absorbing nearby areas into one Municipal Area. This trend has destroyed integration and caused the trend of Centralised efforts in all Municipalities. This trend has caused destruction of basic needs and desires. This trend of Centralization of Municipalities has caused destruction of principal of Public sentiments and not only, centralization against the will of authority and wishes.

Hyderabad was an example of Hyderabad Corporation. Before 1950, There were Two Municipal Corporations for Hyderabad and Secunderabad. In 1955 Hyderabad Corporation was created and afterwards a new Corporation for Hyderabad was created. Later in the year 1960 two Corporations, Hyderabad Municipal Corporation and Secunderabad Municipal Corporations, were merged into single Municipality with the name of GHMC.

On the other hand in 2007 surrounding Municipalities were merged into one GHMC so that finances, better arrangements, implementation of resources, and for the implementation of laws could better be possible.

Present GHMC consists of 5 Zones. Every Zone has 3-4 Circles. Every Circle has many Wards. GHMC consists of 150 elected Corporators. Moreover 25 MLA's, 24 MLC's, 5 Lok Sabha M.P's and 11 Rajya Sabha M.P's are also members of GHMC.

Twelve Ranga Reddy Municipalities were merged into GHMC (due to Revenue Administration). Police Administration comes under the Cyberabad Police Commissioner, whereas Hyderabad and Secunderabad Districts are under the Hyderabad Collectorate. Hyderabad District Collector is responsible for his Area.

Thus, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation Area is under separate Collectorate and separate Police Commissionerate.

I suggest that one Metropolitan area must be under one Collectorate and one Police Commissioner.

Necessity of New Administrative Structure

Best City Governance – Problems and Challenges

Increasing population in the cities has become a biggest problem to the Cities, particularly there is a problem of basic structure and issues of best Governance. Increasing undiscipline, shortage of land, open space, housing problems, severe traffic jams, scarcity of water, lighting problem, Slums and

increasing pollution has created day to day problems of the cities.

In fact, 72 percent pollution is causing difficulties for traffic jams. Each day Indian Cities has a problem for city dwellers, and there is no solution. Unless without better Governance, no one can dream a better life in cities. Unless the Administration takes better approach, sustainable development is not possible to the city dwellers.

Does New Administrative Structure is Needed?

One of the city problem is that there is no uniform structure of Municipal Administration. Three big Metropolitan Cities Mumbai, Delhi, and Chennai has adopted the Commissionerate administration. Council works as a thinking body. Whereas Kolkatta has adopted the system of Mayor in Council.

In the year 2012, New Delhi divided Municipal Council into three parts, North, South, and Eastern Parts, whereas DDA is a separate Institution in New Delhi. The fact is that Delhi Municipal Council and Delhi Cantonment Board is also working.

It is a fact that Second Administrative Commission had proposed for the direct selection of Mayor. But Selection of Mayor is not uniform in India.

Conditions of Better Governance

Conditions of Better Governance is related to local representative Government, decentralisation of power, length of city bodies and effective administrative machinery. But from years together Indian Citizens are taking refuge in the present context only, and try to remain in the present system instead of true change.

Dr. P. K. Mohanty says that within the system we need to change our structures with new efforts, new resources, and making the system answerable. He called this the most "Hall Mark".

Our bad luck was that we Indian have not concentrated on bulkiness of local bodies. Cities are increasing day by day, with increasing corruptions. Municipalities are increasing, and there is more corruption in the system. With increasing Municipalities and Metropolitans has representing less number of representatives in the local bodies.

Second Administrative Commission has noted that number of representatives are more than Ten percent. In the Gram Sabha every member get equal opportunity to place their issues. On the other hand City local bodies have meager time to discuss their grievances. To tackle this issue demands creation of new city Governments.

To tackle the above problem, 74th Constitutional Amendment Law suggests that in every Three lakhs population Ward Committees be established. Second Administrative Commission has suggested that for Municipal Council and for Municipal Corporations a new kind of Structure be introduced.

Second Administrative Commission has suggested that at lower Level one Area Sabha, in the middle level every Ward must have a Ward Committee and at the Upper level must be a City Council or a Municipal Corporation.¹¹

New Structure

This papaer suggests that, Government agencies believe in rule of the Cities. Whereas on the other hand there are many who believe in the development programmes like JNNURM programmes.

Moreover, to make cities more powerful, city Administration must consider the following Suggestions.

1. A combined system be considered with the three tier Governance with an Administration. On the first tier at the upper level there must directly elect Mayor.
2. From every Zone one elected Mayor for every zone, along with a few other Mayoral assistants be there. It Means a collective Administration will run the Administration.
3. There shall be a mid level elected body with one elected Chairman.
4. At other level Public would be a part of control to fulfill the desires of commoners.
5. Elected body have a limited role, care should be taken for decentralisation, Administrative Structure be powerful with less interfere in Administration.
6. At the level of Metropolitan/Corporation interfere of Politicians be Minimal.
7. First level of Administration there must be full control of Administration. Administration would provide all facilities to the workers. At the Second level Administration would provide facilities to the workers. Another level of body would consist of Corporators and Counselors, take the responsibility of discussions, and they would responsible to the collective body.
8. Mayor and the collective body would be controlling body.
9. One Corporation be responsible for it's affairs, and must not be collectivity of Organizations.
10. Elected members should not be elected more than twice.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Traditional and Contemporary City Administration in India

Parameter	Traditional Municipal Administration	Contemporary City Administration	Major Challenges
Legal Status	State legislation with limited constitutional protection	Constitutional status under the 74th Constitutional Amendment	Uneven implementation across states
Administrative Structure	Municipal Council or Municipal Corporation with limited decentralization	Municipal Corporations, Municipal Councils, Nagar Panchayats, Metropolitan Planning Committees and Ward Committees	Institutional fragmentation and overlapping jurisdictions
Governance Approach	Centralized administration	Decentralized and participatory governance	Limited devolution of powers
Financial Resources	Heavy dependence on State Governments	Property tax, grants, user charges, municipal finance, Smart City funding	Inadequate own-source revenue and fiscal autonomy
Citizen Participation	Limited public involvement	Ward Committees, Area Sabhas, online grievance redressal, e-participation	Low public awareness and irregular functioning of local committees
Technology Adoption	Manual administration and paper-based records	E-Governance, GIS, Integrated Command and Control Centres (ICCCs), Digital Municipal Services	Digital divide and shortage of technical expertise
Urban Planning	Conventional master planning	Integrated metropolitan planning, Smart Cities, GIS-based planning	Coordination among multiple planning agencies
Service Delivery	Conventional civic services	Smart water supply, waste management, intelligent transport systems, online citizen services	Rapid population growth and infrastructure deficits

Administrative Coordination	Limited inter-departmental coordination	Multi-agency governance involving Municipal Corporations, Development Authorities, Revenue Administration and Police	Overlapping institutional responsibilities
Future Direction	Expansion of municipal administration	Sustainable, resilient, technology-driven and citizen-centric metropolitan governance	Climate change, urban resilience and sustainable financing

Source: Compiled by the author based on Government of India [9], Second Administrative Reforms Commission [12], Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs [13], [14], Jha [16], and OECD [24].

4. Conclusion

City administration in India has undergone substantial transformation from the colonial municipal system to the constitutionally empowered Urban Local Bodies established under the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992. The constitutional reforms strengthened democratic decentralization by providing legal recognition to Municipal Corporations, Municipal Councils, and Nagar Panchayats and by assigning them greater responsibility for urban planning, infrastructure development, and the delivery of essential public services. Despite these reforms, the rapid pace of urbanization, metropolitan expansion, and increasing population has exposed significant institutional and administrative challenges that continue to affect the efficiency of city governance. The study demonstrates that Indian cities have become the engines of economic growth, innovation, education, and employment, contributing significantly to national development. However, this rapid urban growth has also intensified problems such as traffic congestion, inadequate housing, environmental pollution, poor waste management, water scarcity, slum expansion, and pressure on civic infrastructure. Metropolitan cities, including Hyderabad, Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai, and Kolkata, illustrate the complexities of governing large urban agglomerations where multiple administrative agencies operate simultaneously, often resulting in overlapping jurisdictions, fragmented planning, and delays in decision-making.

The analysis further indicates that although Urban Local Bodies have acquired constitutional status, their effectiveness is constrained by limited financial autonomy, inadequate technical capacity, dependence on State Governments, and insufficient coordination among municipal corporations, metropolitan development authorities, revenue departments, and law enforcement agencies. These structural limitations reduce administrative responsiveness and hinder the implementation of sustainable urban development policies.

The discussion on the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) highlights the practical

challenges associated with metropolitan governance. Expansion of municipal boundaries has improved regional planning and infrastructure development; however, the coexistence of multiple authorities responsible for planning, revenue administration, policing, and service delivery has created institutional fragmentation. Similar governance issues are evident in several metropolitan regions across India, indicating the need for a more integrated administrative framework.

The study supports the view that future city administration should move beyond conventional municipal governance toward an integrated metropolitan governance model characterized by functional decentralization, financial empowerment, technological innovation, and citizen participation. Strengthening Ward Committees, Area Sabhas, and local representative institutions can enhance accountability and improve public participation in decision-making. Likewise, empowering directly accountable urban leadership, supported by professional municipal administration and transparent financial management, can improve service delivery and administrative efficiency.

Digital governance initiatives such as Smart Cities Mission, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Integrated Command and Control Centres (ICCCs), online citizen services, and data-driven urban planning have demonstrated significant potential for improving municipal administration. However, technological interventions alone cannot address urban governance challenges unless they are accompanied by institutional reforms, capacity building, fiscal decentralization, and coordinated planning among all urban agencies.

In conclusion, sustainable city administration in India requires comprehensive reforms that integrate constitutional principles of decentralization with modern governance practices. A coordinated metropolitan governance structure, greater fiscal autonomy for Urban Local Bodies, professional municipal management, stronger institutional coordination, and active citizen participation are essential for addressing the challenges of rapidly expanding cities. Such reforms will enable Indian

cities to become more inclusive, resilient, environmentally sustainable, and economically competitive while ensuring efficient delivery of public services and improving the quality of urban life for future generations.

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