

## Chandigarh lends a clue to Hyderabad's future

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The settlement of regional aspirations has been marked by drift, delay and ad hocism on the part of the political leadership, be it Punjabi Suba movement, Gorkhaland or Bodoland.

In the trifurcation of Andhra Pradesh, the political leadership is guilty of the same perverse wisdom witnessed in the mid-1960s when Punjab was trifurcated and the state capital of Chandigarh was given the status of a union territory.

The Punjab problem has persisted and Chandigarh has been the bone of contention. The people of Andhra Pradesh can do very well by learning from the Punjab experience.

Chandigarh was awarded to Punjab in February 1970 with a promise to transfer it back after five years. It did not happen. Punjab was pushed into its darkest phase, culminating in the assassination of Indira Gandhi followed by November 1984 carnage against Sikhs.

The Punjab accord was signed in 1985 between the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Sant Harchand Singh Longowal with a promise to transfer Chandigarh to Punjab by January 1986. Owing to political dithering, this award is yet to be implemented.

What are the lessons from Punjab experience? The first and foremost lesson is that ad hoc solutions may push the dispute on the backburner, but it has potential to produce tragedies for the people. The freezing of conflicts leaves its sickening mark along the way.

The proposition that Hyderabad will be capital of both for ten years is a fodder for re-emergence of identity conflict as has been witnessed in case of Punjab.

Secondly, the Punjab experience has shown that such a situation throws up another party to the conflict. Instead of two parties i.e. Punjab and Haryana, a third party has been added to the conflict are citizens of Chandigarh.

The emergence of third party that develops a vested interest in the status quo becomes a major hurdle in the resolution of conflict. As in the case of Chandigarh, a new identity of being a Chandigarhian has developed rather than being a Punjabi or Haryanavi.

This is a consequence of its being a union territory where resources are allocated by the Centre leading to unevenness in the development, disparities and social divisiveness in relation to other areas.

For instance, Chandigarh was allocated huge resources when other urban centres stagnated. This island model of development created differentiated opportunities for a privileged few. It has the highest number of per capita automobiles in the country. The opulence created anonymous neighbourhoods that are becoming increasingly vulnerable to crime.

As a union territory, Chandigarh is a unique experiment in urban governance where the bureaucracy without any stakes, roots or much political interference enjoys unquestioned powers and sufficient resources. It has produced all kinds of distortions.

People's participation is discouraged by the bureaucratic setup that describes it as interference. The new identity formation and its disconnect with larger identity has led to the destabilisation of regional forces and all kinds of social unrest ranging from communalisation to criminalisation.

Hyderabad may also experience a similar kind of identity formation process leading to activation of communalisation and criminalisation process. Its own growth may also get stunned.

Another lesson is that states without a capital city lose a space that can act as a driver of growth. For instance, Punjab's growth has suffered a major setback for having no control over its own capital.

It could not build another one because of ongoing dispute. It missed the IT revolution because it did not have advantages of its own growth pole. In other words, in the absence of its own central business capital it has suffered a major setback in the neoliberal globalised economy.

Similarly, without their own capital city and little control over Hyderabad both the states-Telangana and Andhra Pradesh may suffer a development lag.