

Telangana: Righting Historical Wrongs or Getting the Future Right?

ANANT MARINGANTI

The Telangana movement centred on a cultural identity may indeed succeed in winning statehood. Yet, identifying and redressing the grievances of Telangana is a twofold challenge: countering crisis-ridden state cultures of neoliberal populism and harnessing the global city region of Hyderabad towards more equitable development. Historicist narratives of grievance and injury obscure the more recent roots of the Telangana movement, to be found in the anger against the dystopia of competitive populist politics in post-reform Andhra Pradesh, which has also produced new geographies of accumulation, injustice and exclusion in the last 20 years. This remains to be acknowledged.

Anant Maringanti (amaringanti@gmail.com) is a consultant with the Urban Research and Policy Programme, National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore.

Rajiv Rahadari is the Asian Development Bank-funded state highway connecting Hyderabad, the state capital of Andhra Pradesh, via Karimnagar to Ramagundam – two of the many important centres of power and affluence in Telangana. Cruising along this road, a decade ago, one simply could not help sensing the palpable fear enveloping villages on either side of the road – fear of police raids, encounter killings and Maoist reprisals against informers. Today, roads like Rajiv Rahadari in Telangana present quite a different picture. There is an exuberant expression of popular aspiration for a separate Telangana state. Relay hunger strikes, fasts unto death, community feasts, signboards and even vehicle registration plates marked with the alphabets TG standing for Telangana in place of the official AP standing for Andhra Pradesh.

Although there are occasional reports of militant actions reminiscent of the Peoples' War Group of the 1980s burning down Mandal Revenue offices, these are confined to remote areas contiguous with forests. Assurances by the leaders that criminal cases against protesters will be revoked once statehood is achieved have boosted the general confidence of the participants in these protests. Clearly, a new democratic space has opened up in Telangana, but it is as intriguing as it is unnerving. Along Rajiv Rahadari, one cannot help remembering the concluding sentence of Duncan Forrester's (1970) essay on the agitation for a separate Telangana – "the tragedy of Telangana is that so little was done to identify or deal with the legitimate grievances of the area for so many years. The consequence we may hope, may be a new sensitivity to similar situations developing in other states."

Spiralling prices of essential commodities, widespread underemployment in

agriculture, low crop yields due to poor rainfall and the spin-off effects of the international financial crisis radiating from Hyderabad may have all contributed to the general mood of despondency and anger in rural Telangana in December 2009. But the passion and moral outrage which characterised the actions of the participants in the separate Telangana movement this time around is without parallel in recent years in the region. Even K Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR), the president of Telangana Rashtra Samiti, could not have foreseen the turns and twists that lay ahead on 29 November 2009 when he launched a fast unto death. And without doubt, it can be asserted that it was a sheer lack of insight into the general mood in Telangana that prompted the government to release video clips of KCR ignominiously breaking his fast barely 48 hours later with a glass of fruit juice. Outrage at the thought that the leadership had capitulated all over again ignited a powerful and emotionally fired mobilisation across Telangana with students in two universities (Osmania in Hyderabad and Kakatiya in Telangana) declaring that regardless of KCR's breaking the fast, the movement will go on. Local mobilisations sprang up overnight at the mandal level across Telangana. The leadership of the movement got distributed among a number of new actors although the small clutch of people surrounding KCR continues to hold the reins.¹

Momentum of Protest

We will never know whether KCR voluntarily embraced the ignominy or if he was indeed duped by his captors (he was whisked away by a special police unit on his way to the venue of the fast at Siddipet in Medak district) into believing that he was only drinking water as he claimed shortly thereafter. It did not matter. What mattered was that as far as the public was considered, breaking the fast was simply not an option for him unless he was prepared for virtual political suicide. KCR was literally heaved up and was forced to ride a wave of popular protest. From that point on, every single image on the more than a dozen news channels in Telugu was consumed by the public and interpreted and

acted upon instantly. Clips of police beating up students in Osmania University campus, KCR lying in his bed, hourly reports on his medical condition, ill-informed and inflammatory rhetoric of the politicians from coastal Andhra, every little bit fed into igniting new actions across Telangana. The staccato ended only when the Union Home Minister Chidambaram made the announcement in Delhi on 9 December that the process for the formation of Telangana would be started. The 10-day drama involving so many new actors all over Andhra Pradesh, within the Congress Party, and in Delhi effectively put paid to the clumsy claims to power by Y S Jaganmohan Reddy, the scion of recently deceased chief minister of Andhra Pradesh Y S Rajasekhara Reddy. The ugly controversy over multi-billion, grossly illegal mining scandal in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh by the Karnataka Minister Gali Janardan Reddy disappeared from the public consciousness. But that was only the first act in the drama as protests began in the coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema districts against the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh even as the leaders in Telangana withdrew into a huddle to chalk out future strategies.

Andhra Pradesh, at 53, the result of an uneasy and faithless alliance forged in 1956 through a compromise among the elites of three distinct regions – Telangana (the Telugu-speaking part of the erstwhile Nizam-ruled Hyderabad state), Rayalaseema and coastal Andhra (the Telugu-speaking parts of the erstwhile Madras state) – has since been teetering on the brink of bifurcation. The dice is now again in the hands of the central government (read Congress high command) which seems frozen and refusing to roll. Meanwhile, almost all the major political parties, including the two communist parties, are faced with the impossible task of singing the bifurcation song in Telangana and the unity song in the rest of Andhra Pradesh. And business in most government offices has been at a standstill.

Media coverage, mostly focused on the drama in Hyderabad, has obscured the substantive part of the agitation which, in fact, has been concentrated at the smaller urban centres all over Telangana. These urban centres – generally known as the mandal headquarters – are key nodes

where the revenue administration and electoral politics are concentrated and trading in agricultural commodities takes place. It is precisely at these centres that politicians are most susceptible to popular pressure and it is common knowledge in Telangana now that regardless of party affiliations, traders and politicians have been financing the protests. The reasons for this are not hard to understand. Although there is some variation across the region, by and large it is in the smaller urban centres where the spin-off effects of real estate markets in Hyderabad have resulted in increased activity in the sale of agricultural lands.

Importance of Land

The common perception among people is that there are only two ways to get ahead in life – increased productivity of agricultural lands – (especially through assured irrigation) or by converting agricultural land into real estate especially near well-connected places. In popular perception the sharp increase in the monetary value of lands endowed with irrigation or connectivity is associated with surpluses realised in markets elsewhere and largely associated with accomplishments of “Andhra rulers” – a term that refers to the ruling nexus of contractors, politicians and businessmen hailing from Krishna and Guntur districts in coastal Andhra and Kurnool and Kadapa in Rayalaseema. On the flip side, the misfortunes of the lands which are not irrigated or well-connected are also associated with discrimination by the “Andhra rulers”. Ironically, the development of these towns as effective nodes of power across Telangana owes much to the political strategy of the Telugu Desam Party (by and large perceived to be serving the interests of “Andhra rulers” and particularly the caste interests of kamma entrepreneurs from Guntur district).

At the time of its inception, in 1982, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) was faced with a peculiar electoral challenge – how to break the hegemonic caste alliances (Reddy-brahmin-dalit) of the Congress Party? As the strategists of TDP correctly perceived, the institutional nodes at which the Congress’ power congealed were the zilla parishads and gram panchayats. As

counter to this, the TDP introduced an intermediate scale of governance and electoral democracy – namely, the Mandal Praja Parishad at the block level. The creation of electoral democracy and revenue administration at the mandal level opened up a unique space for the backward castes in Telangana who comprised small and medium farmers with little access to irrigation facilities. The first generation of the leaders benefiting from this strategy are now important leaders in the TDP and have been, by and large, the most ambivalent about the separate state demand. However, over the last 15 years, a number of new social groups have emerged at this scale whose efforts at upward mobility have not been very successful. It is those social groups, who have hit various road blocks to social mobility, that are the ones who are the most vocal in demanding a separate state.

Clearly, years of cultural and ideological work done by the Telangana Intellectual Forum has paid off in making Telangana a highly emotive issue. Mass mobilisations are rarely about rational thought. But the bottomline of the current mobilisation is that a significant and visible section of the population has come to believe that there exists a distinct cultural region called Telangana and the prospects for a better life for all inhabiting that region lay only in its gaining a bargaining position in the federal structure of the Indian state. The Telangana cultural identity carefully crafted over time (changing the registration signs, wearing pink scarves, renaming of places, reviving what are taken to be typical Telangana cultural practices), articulating diverse narratives of injustices laying the blame at the door of the “Andhra rulers” has clearly tapped into some deep recesses of the popular psyche to such an extent that for many people identification with something larger than oneself – the Telangana Thalli (Telangana mother) is way of sublimating the mundane problems of everyday life – suicide notes left by the “martyrs”² some times list a variety of difficulties in their personal lives and end with a sentence demanding a separate Telangana. A mismanaged developmental problem or even an interest group model is inadequate to explain this phenomenon.

Regional Subjection

Movements for sub-regional autonomy or statehood have been around in India since the birth of linguistic states in the 1950s. Many of these claims to cultural identities and territorial identifications have their roots in the variegated histories of the nationalist movement and the uneven spread of early print capitalism. Scholars like Forrester (1970) viewing these movements through the dominant cold war paradigm of that period – “modernisation” – attributed such movements to “growing pains of modernisation”. In this view regions with different trajectories of modernisation came in contact with each other under a unified administration and had to compromise with each other. While there may be some sections of the leadership which seek to restore “tradition”, essentially they were movements for more equitable modernisation and therefore progressive in nature. As evidence, the modernisation thesis offered formation of alliances across caste identities and new forms of democratic political mobilisations, etc.

It is tempting to view the contemporary movements for sub-regional autonomy especially in regions such as Telangana, Vidarbha, Bundelkhand, etc, through the same lens – inequitable modernisation and disparities in development due to unequal political power across different parts of linguistic state. Indeed, many of the Telangana ideologues begin their histories of the region with the rebellion against the Nizam and for that matter even insist that for Hyderabad, even the independence day is different from that of India. Thus they mark out the Telangana’s distinctness from the rest of Andhra Pradesh in history. However, a case can be made for a different approach towards understanding the dynamics of the post-liberalisation movements for separate states.

Understanding the Movement

Firstly, in the post-liberalisation period newly assertive regional and sub-regional elites have introduced new tensions in the federal structure of the Indian state. These tensions at times manifest themselves in battles over revenue-sharing arrangements, and at others as unscrupulous alliances in coalition politics. In addition, over the

last two decades, the contradictions of neoliberal reforms have sharpened to such an extent that policymakers in New Delhi are considering possibilities of territorial reorganisation as a strategy to coordinate and contain resistance to reforms. At the state level too, competition among sub-regional elites for prime urban space in state capitals has grown quite intense. The upshot of all this is that while the central government has grown more sympathetic to demands for smaller states, state governments are struggling to manage political competition for control over the state capital. In other words, movements for statehood are simultaneously about struggles for control over cities and elbow room for negotiating with the union government.

Second, even as these competitions and struggles have sharpened during the post-liberalisation period, especially in the second phase of reforms, spatial unevenness in developmental outcomes has shown some surprising features. For example, even while conceding the argument that Telangana as a whole has suffered from discrimination, it cannot be gainsaid that there are pockets of affluence in Telangana which are more prosperous than many towns in Rayalaseema or north coastal Andhra. Indeed, it is a moot question as to how the economies of towns like Karimnagar (with a concentration of finance, commerce, civil contracts and stakes in a range of agro commercial and industrial activities supported by transnational networks), Nizamabad (with a hinterland of sugar cane cultivation, dairy production and allied industrial activity which developed strong transnational networks comparable to towns in coastal Andhra), Ramagundam (with a concentration of industry around the mines) in Telangana escaped the barriers placed on the whole of the region.

To summarise, any rigorous analysis of movements for autonomy or statehood should take these struggles in and across spatial scales and not limit it to a mere flat territorial dispute. And such an analysis should also be informed by a vision of development that accounts for the role of social and infrastructural connectivities across and between places and regions.

With the above caveats in mind, it is important to unravel how the Telangana regional identity has been carefully crafted in the last 15 years picking out specific narratives. To begin with, it must be understood that the migration of coastal Andhra people to Telangana is not a recent phenomenon. It began in the late 1920s when the Nizam government invited farming communities from coastal Andhra to come and settle down in the command area of Nizam Sagar dam. Until the 1980s, this sort of migration – involving almost permanent settlement in Telangana – followed two distinct routes, agricultural investments and government jobs. Notwithstanding formal protections for *mulkis* (local people), these migrant communities insinuated themselves into structures of governmental power and yet maintained cultural boundaries with the local people. In agriculture, for example, in many of the irrigated areas in Telangana one sees villages known as “settler camps” or “Guntur palle” (Guntur villages). By the early 1960s, much of the grape cultivation around Hyderabad was in the hands of such migrant farmer-investors. Similarly, particular segments of government jobs both departmentally and hierarchically came to be occupied by migrants. For example, teaching jobs especially at the college level were occupied by Andhra migrants. Due to a variety of reasons, not excluding sheer nepotism, career advancement in government jobs was much easier for migrants through quick promotions leaving the *mulkis* in the non-gazetted posts. Although from time to time, there have been formal attempts to protect the interests of the *mulkis*, they have mostly remained on paper.³

Since the early 1980s, however, there has been a shift in this sort of migration to Telangana and especially Hyderabad city – both in scale and in diversity of destinations and has taken new spatial forms. For example, although the state government of Andhra Pradesh gave real estate incentives to the film industry dominated by coastal Andhra investments to move from Chennai to Hyderabad since the early 1960s, it was only after 1982, when the matinee idol turned politician NTR became the chief minister that large-scale movement of the film industry

to Hyderabad became possible. Similarly, although the Ranga Reddy district which surrounds Hyderabad and contains large tracts of government-owned lands was formed in the Congress administration in 1979, it was only after the reforms in the central industrial policy in 1980, which opened up the economy for consumer goods that new industrial agglomerations emerged around Hyderabad attracting investments and workers from coastal Andhra. Further, middle class government employees and businessmen from coastal Andhra had been purchasing homes in Hyderabad since the 1960s, it was only in the late 1970s and early 1980s that new housing lots opened up in and around Hyderabad because of the release of land by the Hyderabad Urban Development Authority and the AP State Housing Board for large-scale purchases by people from coastal Andhra. These new housing lots, some developed by government institutions, but many of which developed through informal layouts on the fringes of Hyderabad, became dynamic centres of economic growth in Hyderabad city due to the better purchasing power and higher social mobility of the residents.

IT and Hyderabad

The decisive shift in Hyderabad's economy however was triggered in the mid-1990s by an entirely exogenic event in the global IT industry – the discovery of the Y2K bug. Faced with the need to fix the bug, on a world scale, IT industries in the US, Europe and Australia began sourcing cheap labour from India. If any volition can be granted to social groups in Hyderabad in this shift, it is only to the extent that caste networks originating in coastal Andhra used their footing in Hyderabad to capitalise on this demand for labour.⁴ In a very short period of time, IT training institutions mushroomed in localities of Hyderabad like Ameerpet and Dilsukhnagar. At the height of the boom, it was estimated by an informal survey in Hyderabad that 80% of the IT training schools around Ameerpet were run by Kamma entrepreneurs. It was commonly held in the IT industry at that time that 70% of the Telugu IT professionals were from coastal Andhra, hailing from just four districts – Guntur, Krishna, East and West Godavari.

The transnational sociologies of this boom are still not understood very well, but from the little that we know, it is clear that family networks played a very important role by underwriting IT education of eligible bachelors through dowry and repatriation of remittances to be invested in real estate in and around Hyderabad. By the late 1990s, "Have lands in Andhra, have house in Hyderabad and have job in America" as sociologist Biao (2007) describes it, was broadly the character of the resident populations in many upscale residential localities in Hyderabad. The exclusivity of these transnational networks and their consumption styles have had direct consequences for urban development. Urban and intra-regional transportation services have had to align to serve the needs of the residences and workplaces of these communities, which became virtual enclaves of coastal Andhra families with thick transnational networks.

Underscoring all these transformations, throughout the 1980s and 1990s new cultural codes have been inscribed into Hyderabad – through the naming of housing colonies, installation of statues and sculptures, renaming of places and institutions, construction of flyovers, development of new exclusive housing lots and most importantly through cinematic representations of particular locations in Hyderabad which reworked popular imaginations quite significantly.⁵ Many of these refigurements of Hyderabad visage pushed its cosmopolitan cultures inherited from the multilingual Nizam state aside and imposed a narrow parochial "Telugu" culture on it. These transformations in Hyderabad went alongside new types of investments in agriculture and allied activities as well. For example, during the 1980s, the periphery of Hyderabad saw a spurt in poultry farms, even as a trickle of contract farming activity came into Ranga Reddy district in the 1990s via entrepreneurial farmers from Guntur investing in cotton cultivation, mainly employing girl child labour.

Thus, on closer examination, although the perceived injustices meted out to Telangana have some substance in reality, to a large extent, they were the consequences of several translocal processes, and economic and social contingencies

which originated as much in the US and Europe as in coastal Andhra and in Telangana. However, it is also undeniable that much of this uneven, unpredictable, contingent and exclusionist development has been presided over by caste and kinship networks that originated initially in coastal Andhra and more recently in Rayalaseema. The central question is how could all this have been possible without some basic political legitimacy?

Nature of Electoral Politics

Arguably the key to that legitimacy is to be found in the nature of electoral politics in Andhra Pradesh. The aggressive competition between the Congress and the TDP for votes, which began in 1982, very rapidly slid into the basest form of populism coupled with streaks of fascism. On the one hand, successive governments whether ruled by the Congress or the TDP have been extremely intolerant of democratic assertions in Telangana, branded even the most direct demands for grievance redressal in villages as militant activity and dealt with it through police repression. On the other hand, both parties competed with each other in offering laundry lists of subsidies targeted at different social groups as electoral manifestos. This sort of competitive populism left little room for discussions over development strategies but led to violent swings in votes in favour of the candidate promising the most generous of sops particularly in the public distribution system and in the electricity sector but also included a host of targeted schemes for youth, women, artisans, etc. Cash-strapped governments unable to raise sufficient tax revenues resorted to displacement as the only strategy of crisis management. Thus, in order to make good on the deficits due to food subsidy, governments would increase arrack and cheap liquor sales; or cut allocations to other sectors or regions. When public resentment on any of these counts reaches flashpoint (what media pundits euphemistically call anti-incumbency factor) the opposition party seizes the opportunity to ride the wave of public anger into office only to displace the crisis to another sector.

This style of governance became virtually institutionalised in the post-NTR phase of the TDP rule between 1996 and 2004.

Bankrolled by the structural adjustment loans and aid packages from international institutions, Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu crafted a new style of cadre building and managing politics by offering monetary sops and incentives to key actors or groups through the formation of user groups, self-help groups, etc, and linking them up to a variety of monetary incentives. Given this background, the popular wisdom in Hyderabad these days is that if YSR who ousted Chandrababu Naidu had been alive, the separate Telangana issue would not have arisen at this time sounds quite reasonable – except that those who express such wishful thinking often leave out the secret of Y S Rajasekhara Reddy's power.

Since coming to power in 2004, YSR proved most efficient in marshalling the institutional mechanisms and cultures of politics that Naidu introduced and managed them most effectively with a combination of an iron fist and populism meeting all political questions with wads of money – by buying out opposition right down to the grassroots. It was in this climate of ever present crisis, ubiquitous opportunism that characterised the restructuring of the Andhra Pradesh economy, that a fly-by-night kind of entrepreneurship came to be associated with all dominant and visible actors in the public space – a political culture that the current leadership of the Telangana movement has successfully construed as the “other” of the Telangana identity. This identity with its moral underpinnings is precisely the source of the strength of conviction with which many of the participants in the current agitation are acting. And it came to assert itself precisely at the moment when the command centre of that political culture – the chief minister's office – lies virtually vacant. After YSR's accidental death, although K Rosaiah the diminutive septuagenarian nominally took over as chief minister, he simply is not equal to the tradition of ruthless micromanagement of politics that YSR mastered.

Getting the Future Right

It is a moot question as to whether identities can ever be pure – that is, is the Telangana identity itself uncontaminated by the short-sightedness and greed which is associated with “Andhra rulers”? For,

when displacement of crisis has been de facto state strategy, when populism with streaks of fascism has been the idiom of dominant politics for so long, could it have been without the complicity of the people of Telangana? Can capture of state power or redrawing of state boundaries by itself accomplish anything other than a change of actors – keeping the scripts intact?

Without foreclosing the possibilities for the future it must be acknowledged that the leadership of the current Telangana agitation has said little by way of how it intends to do business differently. Diverse as it is, and full of social groups and memories of progressive movements – the movement may indeed be capable of achieving the uphill task of cultural reconstruction. But the signs are yet to show. At the level of vision for the future, too much of the discourse around Hyderabad as of now remains as if Hyderabad is what it was in 1969 – a quiet city with some public sector undertakings and a university that largely served the hinterland – just beginning to lose its cosmopolitan culture. The only complication it would seem is that migrants from Andhra areas have captured all the real estate around Hyderabad (a claim that sounds reasonable in the present political climate, but it still needs to be empirically established what the relative shares and roles of Telangana and non-Telangana actors in the murky real estate markets around Hyderabad are).

Today's Hyderabad, however, is in reality an economic driver feeding cheap labour to global industries and spawning consumption-driven economies locally. It is a gateway to new opportunities and new mobilities for hundreds of thousands of people not just from Telangana but from everywhere in India. Indeed, it is precisely for this reason that students in universities in the rest of Andhra Pradesh have been opposed to the bifurcation of the state as they fear they will lose access to Hyderabad. For hundreds of thousands of low income group students all over Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad is where the jobs are. Hyderabad is where the passport office is. It is where the US Consulate is. For patients suffering from all sorts of medical conditions in Andhra Pradesh and Orissa, Hyderabad is where the hospitals are. Hundreds of thousands of people come to

Hyderabad everyday and stay on for varying lengths of time to pursue their dreams. Land and housing do play an important role, and speculative real estate markets dominated by developers from coastal Andhra have contributed to the mess, but the challenge of managing Hyderabad can hardly be reduced to one of landed properties. It is about grasping the city's location in global flows that stretch into hinterlands mainly through kinship networks rather than through inclusive public channels.

The aggressive spatial restructuring of Hyderabad over the last 15 years has left many of the older as well as newer residents feeling alienated and helpless. Activist groups moved whether by nostalgia or by new age environmentalisms or by desire for more intimate and hospitable urban spaces are aplenty in Hyderabad and some of them indeed extend support to the separate Telangana with Hyderabad as the capital. Yet, few of these groups have engaged with the nitty-gritty of land management practices – the new economies that have spurred the new urban development – or with the problems of governance and fiscal management that the city is currently mired in. The urban-led development strategy that has been in vogue since 1995 is not purely a product of the greed of the “Andhra rulers”. The vision for that style of urbanisation was after all drawn up by the McKinsey global consultants. It emerged through a host of contingent developments across the whole world.⁶ To the extent that there is a coherent vision, it is one that is approved of by the Union Urban Development Ministry which is headed by Jaipal Reddy, whose credentials as a Telangana politician are hard to challenge.

Globalising the City-Region

The inescapable reality is that Hyderabad is a globalising city-region in its own right. Such city-regions by their very nature are places constituted by diverse flows of information, capital, and workers. Dominant cultural trends in places like Hyderabad are set by migrant populations variously endowed with social, cultural and financial capitals – and they simply cannot be controlled by “localist” agendas. One is yet to see an apprehension of this reality among the spokespersons for Telangana.

One hardly expects such clarity from the leadership of coastal Andhra or Rayalaseema, but one does hear an occasional interjection from civil liberties activists from towns in Rayalaseema or from North Coastal Andhra which in sheer economic terms are much poorer than many areas in Telangana.

Even if we were to look at the city's challenges as somehow entirely "locally" generated, these are cumulative effects of successive disruptions in the management of the city's affairs over 60 years beginning in 1948 when the records of large tracts of land were transferred to the Indian government. Then, again, at the time of state integration in 1956 the new administrative system marginalised the older and experienced officers. And, again, in 1983, when the newly elected Telugu Desam Party abolished the traditional revenue system, where the local record-keeping was a hereditary occupation, large amounts of local knowledges were lost. And, then, finally in 1997-98, shortly after Hyderabad adopted the global city model, many of the functions of the municipality, the urban development authority and the revenue department were reorganised. Files and papers were moved between offices often resulting in utter chaos, such that few of the officers manning important positions are able to unravel. Financially, having been pushed to adopt new accounting practices and build credibility for itself in capital markets and with no major enhancement of tax revenues, the Hyderabad Municipal Corporation today is stuck in a financial mire waiting for the state government to at least make good on funds that are due to it. The Greater Hyderabad today is an unwieldy beast lacking in control over large pockets of urban areas, which are declared as special development areas (e.g., Cyberabad Development Authority, Hyderabad Airport Development Authority), exempted from zonal regulations of urban planning, contributing little by way of taxes to the municipal bodies and managed by executive powers with few checks.

At the same time, since 1997, Hyderabad has received a large number of workers from all over the country. The IT and the BPO sector and the hospitality industry are only the most conspicuous of them. Construction

workers from Bihar and Maharashtra, security guards from Chhattisgarh, cooks from Orissa, nurses from Kerala, IT professional from West Bengal jostle with car drivers and autorickshaw drivers and apartment watchmen from Warangal, Nalgonda, Mahboobnagar, Medak and Karimnagar districts. Although the IT and BPO sector was initially dominated by investors from coastal Andhra, and the film and media industry continues to be dominated by investors from coastal Andhra, the inequalities that are emerging in the city and refracting into the hinterland are fractal in their nature and cannot be contained by any easy redrawing of territorial boundaries.

Towards More Bearable Inequality

The challenge of managing Hyderabad in a way that will directly benefit the hinterland is not simply one of getting rid of a section of the global flows, or gaining control over the flows. Rather, it is one of finding new ways to manage and regulate the global flows and bend them towards more bearable forms of inequality. There are also obvious geographical challenges that will confront both Telangana and coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema – as bifurcation of the state will mean redrawing of connectivities – Hyderabad has the international airport and is on the trunk route to Delhi while coastal Andhra has the ports. Basic economics tells us that no region can develop exclusively endogenously or exclusively exogenously. How will these two states recraft their connectivities with each other and with other places?

In short, it must be acknowledged that the problem of Telangana is as much about redressing historical grievances as it is about getting the future right. It is not about recovering intact Hyderabad's lost cosmopolitanism but about reinventing it – of harnessing the city's hydra-headed economies towards growth with distributive justice. It is about rewiring places in Telangana to allow for economic and social and political dynamism. That vision has to be independent of state power. It can only be brought into being by thinking both "against state power" – and "with state power", because as we have seen the

logics of state power and the compulsions of populist politics in recent years have left very little room for imagination and creativity. And it is precisely on this score that one has yet to hear something reassuring from the leadership of the movement for Telangana.

NOTES

- 1 This was as much an accomplishment of the political leadership of Telangana as it was of the 24-hour news channels that introduced a sense of urgency and reduced the attention span of all actors to a fraction of a second. But that is a different story.
- 2 Over the last two months, an unusually large number of suicides and deaths due to heart attacks have been attributed by the media to a sense of desperation among adherents of the separate Telangana. According to a tally made by a Telangana activist, 60 persons have either died due to heart attacks or by committing suicide as on 15 December. All of the dead are in the age group of 20 to 40 and all are male. (This is closely paralleled by similar instances in the coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema regions.) However, the commonality ends there. Among the dead are students, farmers, construction workers and government employees and lawyers.
- 3 This narrative is necessarily a highly selective one to suit the purpose of this article. The histories and geographies of Telangana's grievances have been written and spoken about so widely and so often by activists, scholars and official committees that they hardly bear reproduction here. But for anyone interested in the details can refer to Simhadri and Rao (1997).
- 4 For a discussion of the implications of such trans-local processes for political theory, see Muppidi (2004).
- 5 For a discussion of how the urban landscape was reinscribed with new codes see Srinivas (2008).
- 6 Curiously enough, the only grudging acknowledgement of this in official documents is to be found on page 2 of the draft Master Plan of Hyderabad Urban Development Authority (2003) where the authors candidly admit that in a span of a decade, actual land use patterns in Hyderabad had changed so drastically that a piece of land that was allotted for agricultural godowns were humming with activity as the National Institute of Fashion Technology and Cyber Towers.

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