

Seminar
Understanding and Reimagining Andhra Pradesh:
A Critical Appraisal of Developments after 2014

(Makineni Basavapunnayya Hall, Vijayawada, 11-12 August, 2019)

Organized by:
Institute for Research on Andhra Pradesh (IRAP)

It is now five years since the united state of Andhra Pradesh was dissolved to form two new states - Telangana and residual Andhra Pradesh. It is time to do a careful review and move ahead with continued efforts in constructing these states. This seminar is meant to generate a critical perspective about the state of Andhra Pradesh.

The most prominent issue that the new state of Andhra Pradesh has grappled with is the construction of a new capital city (Amaravati). Two other issues also received considerable attention during the first five years of the ‘new’ state – constructing newly or improving existing irrigation projects such as Polavaram, Pattiseema and Handri-Neeva; and creation of economic development zones in each district such as Sri City in Chittoor district, Kia car project in Anantapur district, Aqua zones in south coastal Andhra districts and Fintech city in Visakhapatnam.

There was expectation in the immediate aftermath of the formation of the new state that it would get a Special Category status from the Central Government. Central Government (under NDA rule) rejected this demand – an act that acquired enormous political significance for all the major political parties in the state - YSR Congress, Telugu Desam, Jana Sena as well as the Left parties. Therefore, other means to generate funds/capital were tried out - (1) Voluntary land pooling scheme, (2) Amendment to the right to fair compensation and transparency in land acquisition, rehabilitation and resettlement act of 2013 (LARRA), (3) Mobilizing resources through public-private partnerships such as Amaravati bonds, (4) Sale of securities through an auction by RBI, (5) Issuing special bonds to non-resident Telugus, (6) Attracting foreign capital from East Asian and Southeast Asian countries such as Singapore, Malaysia and Japan, (7) Promoting tourism as one of the key developmental agendas for mobilising revenues. Hence, the previous government tried to showcase various sites and activities - 14th Century Kondaveedu Fort as heritage site, adventure sports academy at Gandikota, recreational facilities in Bhavani Island, formula one motor boat racing on river Krishna, formula racing circuit at Tanakallu in Anantapur district, AP medical tourism hub in Rishikonda, and Amaravati marina project in Venkatapalem in the capital city region.

Notwithstanding these efforts, the situation on the ground indicates that the economic conditions of farmers, tenants, landless, agricultural workers, weavers and petty commodity producers in all the three regions (North Coastal Andhra, South Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema) have deteriorated and economic inequalities have become accentuated over the last five years. There has been unprecedented out-migration from the rural areas of the state as well as a rapid spurt of in-migration from Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha and Kerala in areas like agriculture, construction, capital city building and aquaculture. The state also aggressively pursued land acquisition/pooling for development projects heightening dispossession and displacement. In addition, there were two severe cyclonic storms Hudhud in 2014 and Titli in 2018 in north coastal Andhra damaging crops, property and loss of livelihoods. Also the state has been reeling under severe drought conditions for the past three years and out of 670 mandals, half of them officially declared as drought prone in the year 2018. The ground situation is reflected in protests and resistance movements against land acquisition (most of which are localised), Bhavanapadu port, Godavari Mega Aqua Food Park in west Godavari district, rationalisation of government schools, privatisation of education and health, and agrarian distress. Given this situation, AP government was forced to come up with several populist welfare schemes, notably - three lakh houses to the eligible poor, doubling the existing old age pensions, Pasupu Kumkuma, Annadata Sukheebhava, lunch at rupees five through Anna Canteens, unemployment doles for youth, and NTR Vydy Seva. The election results of 2019 reflect the intensity of resentment against TDP government giving a clear mandate to YSR Congress. The new government has set its agenda through 'Navaratnalu', nine populist and welfare programmes – YSR Rythu Bharosa, Fee Reimbursement, Aarogyasri, Jalayagnam, Ban on Alcohol, Amma Vodi, YSR Cheyutha, Pedalandiriki Illu and Increase in Pensions. In order to critically discuss these and other issues a two-day seminar is being planned by the Institute for Research on Andhra Pradesh (IRAP) during 11-12 August, 2019.

About the Institute for Research on Andhra Pradesh (IRAP):

IRAP is a research organization that is interested in critically researching contemporary Andhra Pradesh through different axes of enquiry – class, caste, gender and region – using perspectives drawn from political economy, history, sociology, geography, political science and cultural studies. Website: www.irap.org.in