

Hindustan chandigarh

Title : guest column Traffic woes: onus lies with us

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guestcolumn

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ria and along with it comes the frustration on the roads as a byproduct in the form of traffic congestions. Every year, a lot of debate is thrown open during this time of the year. However, in line with words of Dr Amartya Sen: "We are too argumentative but not conclusive."

Nothing meaningful is laid down and we start learning to live with it, as a civilised tolerant culture.

This documentation of thoughts is yet another attempt to look into the same problem beyond the peripheries of the conventional fabric of the debate.

Chandigarh was planned with much fanfare, involving the best of the intellectual minds in the world of urban planning and architecture. A project with such a greater influence on urban planning worldwide is gradually renouncing to its own weight in just five decades after its inception.

The experiment of Chandigarh was a fusion in urban planning, with a "modernist super-city image" rested within the streets and passages theory, interwoven with attractive public spaces, placed in an equally distributed zones of a matrix.

Grids, thus, evolved as sectors, which were planned to be self-sufficient with minimal vehicular traffic movement within, were seen as a success, even until early years of the previous decade. However, things are changing now and the onus lies with us as the citizens of the city.

"The seed of Chandigarh is well-sown, It is for the citizens to see that the tree flourishes,"



are the words of those visionaries who knew the soul of any infrastructure, would be its inhabitants and moral responsibility to maintain it too, shall lie with them. The edict even laid down the guidelines for its citizens to follow. But, sincerely speaking, how many of us actually even know about it.

I'll quote a short memoir from the life of Amrita Pritam to provoke a thought here. On her maiden visit to Japan once, walking along the street-side, she inadvertently tore of some papers and threw them on the road and realised some time later, that a native is actually collecting them up. She felt embarrassed, apologised to that gentleman and enquired that why he did not ask her to do the same. The impeccable exhibition of "sense of belonging" reflected in the reply; he said, "you are our guests. It is up to us to maintain our city and the country."

That level of belongingness needs to be triggered in all of us; and believe that, once ignited, we collectively will be liberated, not just from the menace of traffic, but from many other civic vices.

I suggest a few practical suggestions to curb at least the traffic problem for now, beyond the rhetoric ideas of using public transport, for everyone among us to follow:

a) The placement of intra-sector market encourages pedestrian movements. They are placed within 8-10 minutes walking distance from any corner of the same sector. I've

A SENSE OF BELONGINGNESS TO THE CITY IN ALL OF US CAN LIBERATE US FROM MANY CIVIC VICES

heard people saying "Paidal jaata to jaldi wapis aa jaata" (had I gone on foot, I would have returned earlier).

b) Collective shopping decisions can be floated for inter-sector shopping adventures. The collective shopping enables enhanced discounts and encourages car-pooling.

c) Respect traffic rules and signals and cultivate higher traffic sense. Even if somebody has attempted to jump a red light, do not be second to him, and believe me, there will be no third. Ultimately, our children around will be safer.

d) Go green and inspire. For frequent small procurement visits to shops, inter or intra sector, an electric two-wheeler is far better than a car.

e) The loss of life in traffic jams is not because of accidents (they cannot be fatal at slow speeds), but because of scuffles over trivial issues of right of way. Your life is more important than a scratch on your car and if it is more than a scratch, let insurers have their day. Keep smiling on road.

f) The highway syndrome is fatal. Keep reminding yourself roads that we drive on are not F1 circuits and even silver is precious. Do not go for gold every time and never forget people waiting at home. Ask everyone at home before leaving house if they seek something from the bazaar and plan your route of visit to avoid redundancy of travel.

Let's pledge to contribute with our conduct and believe that our city will surely regain and retain, the title of "the city of future" as envisioned by our first Prime Minister.

(The writer is a Chandigarh-based architect)