SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A geographic study of urban-rural relations in the Inter-State Chandigarh Region was undertaken with the following objectives: (i) To study the changing nature of urban-rural relations in the region under study in the broader context of India; (ii) To conduct an examination of the evolving picture of the interaction mechanisms in the region before the emergence of Chandigarh as a newly planned city; (iii) To study the changing nature and intensity of urban-rural relations after the emergence of Chandigarh, and (iv) To comprehend the changes in urban-rural relations with the emergence of Chandigarh as a Union Territory in 1966 and subsequently, thereafter, when it emerged as a regional capital city.

The whole empirical exercise of urban-rural relations was done from the perspective of regional development. There were four salient points of inquiry. These included: (i) What was the nature, spatial extent, and intensity of the urban-rural relations in the region before the emergence of Chandigarh? (ii) How were these urban-rural relations reshaped in the region following the emergence of Chandigarh as a growth centre in a relatively backward region of the then Punjab? (iii) Are these urban-rural relations more economic, social or cultural in nature? and (iv) How far has Chandigarh been successful in establishing linkages with its surroundings?

Further, the study intended to test some hypotheses:

The level of urban-rural relations in a village is positively related to its: (i) Population size, (ii) Percentage of Scheduled Castes population, (iii) Distance from the city, and (iv) Accessibility of roads.
Both primary and secondary sources were tapped for data collection in the scope and extent of the study. Due to non-availability of direct indicators of urban-rural relations, certain surrogate indicators were used. For example, the percentage of rural, non-agricultural workers and availability of pucca roads in a village – represented the magnitude of rural-urban commuting being done in the region. The percentage of irrigated land to total cultivated area in the villages, percentage of cultivated land to total area in the villages as also the percentage of workforce engaged in livestock rearing – all these indicators took care of commodity flow; then there was the indicator for availability of rural health, along with availability of educational and post and telegraphic services – all these captured the service exchange. Adopting the village as a base unit of data analysis, data on various indicators were collected from the Census of India, *District Census Handbook and Village and Town Directory, 1971 and 1991*, available from the Directorates of Census Operations, Chandigarh, Punjab and Haryana. In addition, extensive fieldwork was conducted to collect information/data from 30 villages, as a corroborative exercise. Stratified random sampling technique was put to service for this purpose. This was done, basically, to capture the latest scenario as regards the urban-rural relations in the region with the help of indicators which had not been available in the secondary sources.

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The study area which had been predominantly rural, backward and peripheral before the emergence of the newly envisioned, planned modern city of Chandigarh, witnessed rapid transformation around 1965 after the city had established linkages with its surroundings. The city which had extra-territorial links initially developed sustained relations with its surroundings by forcefully capturing the umlands of other towns/service centres dotting the region. The
hinterland of Chandigarh city, which initially extended over an area of only about 282 sq. kms. and covered 171 villages besides four towns in the 1960s, burgeoned and grew within a decade to 1000 sq. kms covering 395 villages and seven towns. People commuting for work and maintaining a steady supply of milk and vegetables to the city formed the strongest links between Chandigarh and its contiguous region. While the retail-sale, as well as provision of medical and educational services made for comparatively weaker links.

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The slow but steady progress in improved urban-rural interactions gained momentum after 1966 with Chandigarh acquiring the status of Union Territory following the partition of Punjab on lingual basis into Punjab and Haryana states. Later on, subsequent events like the shifting of the Northern Command’s headquarters from Shimla to Chandimandir, the emergence of the satellite towns of Panchkula and Mohali in Haryana and Punjab respectively, as contiguous growths of Chandigarh during the 1970s and also the setting up of the industrial towns of Parwanoo, Baddi and Barotiwala in Himachal Pradesh, with an eye on the prolific business ties with Chandigarh, accelerated the process manifold. On the one hand, the demand for foodgrains, milk, vegetables and poultry products increased, stimulating vegetable cultivation, dairy farming and poultry farming respectively in the surrounding villages. And, on the other, Chandigarh opened up newer avenues of employment for people living in the surrounding villages. It offered a variety of employment opportunities and induced immigration from its backward surroundings. The best presence of quality infrastructure and living facilities in the form of educational institutions, health facilities and transport network were an additional attraction. Thus was established and ensured the success story of a growth pole centre implanted in a backward economy.
It was the phenomenal growth in population size and tremendous expansion of the economic activities in and around Chandigarh city, especially during 1961-81 that within a period of four decades of its establishment, there was the growingly urgent need to develop the city not only as an individual entity but as a city based region for planning. This was what led to the delineation of the Inter-State Chandigarh Region in 1981.

As was to be expected, the regional pattern of urban-rural relations differed widely within various parts of the region. A higher level of urban-rural interaction was found in villages which were (i) large sized (ii) situated in proximity to Chandigarh and (iii) situated along highways radiating out of the city. On the contrary, a lower level of urban-rural interaction was found in villages located in the hilly tracts where physical constraints of topography especially the presence of choes, impeded mobility. Also, villages of the upland and dissected plain had low level of urban-rural relations owing to the lack of suitable connectivity by road. Urban-rural relations, thus, was a function of the population size of a village, its distance from the city, the proportion of Scheduled Castes in its population as well as the transport links it had with Chandigarh. All this was strongly proven by the analysis of data used to test the hypotheses formulated in the beginning of the study.

In the post – 1966 phase, especially during 1971-91, the nature and intensity of urban-rural relations underwent a sea change in the Inter-State Chandigarh Region. Several unforeseen events including the reorganization of Punjab into Punjab and Haryana on a lingual basis, the emergence of Chandigarh as a Union Territory and subsequently as the regional capital for the Northwestern region and the coming up of Mohali town (S.A.S. Nagar) in Punjab and
Panchkula in Haryana as satellite towns, adjacent to Chandigarh city, dynamically pushed forward the process of urban-rural interaction.

More than three-fourths of the surrounding villages witnessed an upward movement in their level of urban-rural interaction during 1971-91. Increased irrigation intensity, road network density, and the greater availability of education, health and communication facilities played a catalytic role in the strengthening of urban-rural relations during this period. All dimensions of urban-rural interaction recorded an upward movement, individually as well as collectively. However, the movement was only from ‘low’ to ‘moderate’ category in case of the dominant majority (597 of 658) of such villages. There were only 14 villages which had moved from the ‘low’ to the ‘high’ level of urban-rural interactions. It must be emphasized here that the upward movement took place mainly because of an upward trend in terms of service exchange while commodity exchange playing only a marginal role. The service exchange with reflects a significant move towards social transformation strongly indicates that the impact of Chandigarh was more on social transformation in comparison to mere economic exchange in its hinterland. The city can more rightly be labelled as a harbinger of social change more than a propeller of economic growth.

Geographically speaking, the highest degree of change in urban-rural relations occurred in areas falling in the immediate surroundings of Chandigarh city and especially in the villages located along the major roads radiating from Chandigarh; for example the Chandigarh-Kalka, Chandigarh–Kharar and Chandigarh – Zirakpur – Rajpura roads. In contrast, the Eastern, North-eastern and South-eastern peripheries of the region (having rugged and hilly terrain) experienced the least change in this regard. Interestingly, a high level of urban-rural interaction was more a phenomenon of the Punjab part of the ISCR, while change was more marked a feature of the Haryana part. In fact, the Haryana
part except for the peripheral hilly tract in the North-east, witnessed faster development during the period of two decades 1971-91. The emergence of Panchkula contiguous to Chandigarh, HMT, an industrial unit of national renown, at Pinjore, the Cement factory at Surajpur and the increased attention of the government to develop the hill and other backward areas under the Backward Area Development Programme during the Fourth Plan period (1969-74) onwards, all contributed to the rapid transformation of this part of the ISCR. In addition, the development of Parwanoo, Baddi and Barotiwala as industrial estates by the state of Himachal Pradesh also further accelerated the process.

In the early parts of 1971, a dominant majority (77 per cent) of the villages in the region recorded a low level of interaction. Nevertheless, there were wide inter-dimensional variations. While six out of every ten villages recorded themselves in the 'moderate' category of commodity exchange, seven out of every ten villages were placed in the 'low' category of commuting and more than 8 out of every ten villages fell in the 'low' category of service exchange during 1971. The villages located in proximity to Chandigarh, especially on the western and eastern sides as well as those placed on the state highways, were far ahead on urban-rural interaction index as compared to the villages located at the foot hills zone of the Siwaliks. These latter type of villages suffered badly because of their remote location, various physical disabilities and long neglect in developmental matters. The intra-category variations were maximum for villages in the low level category of urban-rural interaction, and were minimal in the case of villages included in the high category in 1971. Intra-category variations were maximum in the case of commuting as an indicator, while they were the least for the indicator of commodity exchange. While, the low level category had the maximum intra-category variation in all cases including commodity exchange, commuting, service exchange and aggregate level of urban-rural interactions, the opposite was true in cases of the moderate and
high level categories. This does not conform to general situation as captured in Williamson’s inverted ‘U’ hypothesis, according to which the intra-category differentials are more in moderate level than in low and high levels. Such a situation is mainly attributed to peculiar ecological setting in the ISCR where diversity in physical setting is a well marked feature.

In the post 1991 period, privatization, coupled with revolution in transport, communication and information technologies, played a significant role in shaping the urban-rural relations in the region. A visible change can be seen in their intensity and nature as well as direction and magnitude. Under the changed scenario, the speedily increasing number of vehicles (both two and four wheelers) and telephones (both mobile and landline) have substantially contributed in strengthening the intensity of urban-rural relations. Virtually astronomical progression in transport technology as well as its popular availability has not only facilitated the movement of perishable goods but also increased the mobility of people. The daily commuter zone and supply zone of various commodities which was earlier limited to only 10-15 kms. has extended now to 30-40 kms. The rapid expansion of telephone facility along with transport facility boosted trade and service links between Chandigarh and its surrounding region. The retail traders in villages were in a position to place orders conveniently on the telephone at the wholesale market and the goods could be supplied at their doorsteps i.e. of the retail traders in surrounding villages within hours from Chandigarh or its satellite towns.

Of late, a new trend in urban-rural relations has been observed to be emerging. A number of residential colonies have sprung up in villages and towns around Chandigarh in the wake of exorbitant land / real estate prices in the city. Similarly, many private institutions for technical and professional education
have come up in the villages. These institutions ensure a pickup facility for their students, teaching faculty and other members of the staff. This has altered the direction and course of urban-rural relations in the region. It is now the rural areas which are attracting the city dwellers and that too for the benefits of a higher technical and professional education. This trend will definitely pave, in the near future, a new path towards enhanced urban-rural relations in the region. It can be safely concluded that urban and rural areas are heading towards a symbiosis. How far and to what extent they succeed will only be answered in due course of time.

All the four hypotheses formulated in the study have been validated by the empirical analysis of the data. The statistical results of the analysis suggest a strong positive correlation of independent variables viz. population size of villages, proportion of Scheduled Castes population residing in them, their distance from the city and accessibility by road vis-à-vis their levels on the urban-rural interaction index. Although, all the hypotheses are significant at one per cent level, which is very high, yet in relative terms, accessibility by road fincs the strongest association on the urban-rural interaction index. This is followed by other factors like population size of villages, distance from the city and proportion of Scheduled Castes population in a village, in sequential order.

The present study naturally throws an agenda for future research. It would be imperative to address the several pertinent issues related to the theme which could be picked up. In this direction, evolving a theoretical framework for the study of urban-rural relations as evolving through the times in time-space perspective would be a most rewarding theme of research. Infact, till date there
is hardly any theoretical framework available to conduct the study of urban-rural relations in India. Secondly, understanding of urban-rural relations to know which strategies are the most appropriate for accelerating the process of regional development in a city-based region could be another area of research. Thirdly, there is a need to understand urban-rural relations from the angle of organization / re-organisation of territorial administration. Gradually, a situation is emerging in India when we would require to carve out metropolitan area based administrative regions. For functional unity, such units are ideally suited for regional development planning. If the planning regions and administrative regions conform to reach other, especially in the case of metropolitan regions, the problems of administrative coordination, financial allocation and conflicts in political and economic interests will be minimized.