

CHAPTER-1

INTRODUCTION

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Independence of India marked that end of a long night of slavery under the British, but it was the beginning of a new effort among the people of Hyderabad state whose ruler laid a claim to independence. At the time of Indian Independence and the division of the country into India and Pakistan, the princely states numbering about 600 were expected to join the Indian Union. Many did so, including Mysore, Baroda and Gwalior, but the Nizam of Hyderabad took a different stand. The ferment that was created led to the people's struggle. This movement culminated in the Police Action in Hyderabad in 1948 leading to integration of Hyderabad state to the Indian Union. The period from August 1947 to September 1948 was a period of all shades of nationalist opinion.

The city of Hyderabad founded in 1591 by the fifth Qutub Shahi ruler, Mohammed Quli Qutub Shah played a remarkable role as the largest princely state in India. The erstwhile Nizam's dominion of Hyderabad comprised of the present day Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh, the districts of Bidar, Gulbarga and Raichur in Karnataka and the Marathwada region, comprising of Mannad, Aurangabad, Parbhani, Barsi, Nanded, Sholapur, Oamanabad and Akalkot of Maharashtra. The state was an extensive plateau with an average elevation of about 12,00 feet. The dominions formed a lateral square situated between 15°10' and 21°50' north latitude and between 74°45' and 81°35' east longitude¹. A trigonometrical survey of the region shows the area to be 97,837 square miles. Its area is more than that of England and Scotland put together, equal to that of France and five times that of Switzerland. The length of the State from east to west is 456 miles. Its breadth from north to south is 384 miles. It has an average elevation of 1,250 feet and is intersected by ranges of hills with summits rising from 2,500 ft. to 3,500 ft. The surface of the country has a general slope from north to south-east.²

¹ Some Aspects of Hyderabad in Indian Historical Records Commission, 30th Session, Hyderabad, 1954. P21

² Administrative report of this Highness the Nizam's Dominions for 1294 fasli (1883-85) in Andhra Pradesh State gazetteers Office, Hyderabad.

The history of Asaf Jahi rule in Hyderabad begins with Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah I (1724-48) who was one of the strongest personalities to emerge during the chaotic period following the decline of the Mughal power after the death of Aurangzeb. He held the position as Subedhar of Deccan in 1713 but was recalled to Delhi within two years.

In 1720 during Faukh Siyar's reign, he was sent to Malwa as a Subedhar but soon managed to find a band of faithful adherents and set himself up as Viceroy of Deccan. He was recalled again to Delhi within a year. In 1724, he fought and killed Mubariz Khan, the former Subedhar of Hyderabad. He declared himself the ruler of independent State of Hyderabad and the Mughal Emperor conferred on him the title of Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah. By the time of his death in 1748, the 1st Nizam had left the impress of his personality on the affairs of South. He succeeded by his son Nizam Ali. Between 1798 and 1800 the British persuaded the second Nizam to enter into the Subsidiary Alliance Treaty under which the British were allowed to station a permanent armed force in Secunderabad, ostensibly to protect the Nizam from his internal and external enemies, but actually to keep him and his court in a permanent State of subjection to the British, by then the ascending power in India. Thus the Nizam had no say on matters of war and peace. By signing another treaty of 1802, Nizam Ali Khan further empowered the British to trade freely in Nizam's dominions. The British Resident stationed at Hyderabad was the virtual ruler, whereas the Nizam acted as a mere nominal head of the State. The Nizam had no power to even select his own Prime Ministers who was often appointed on the whims of the British. The political compulsions and administrative constraints resulted in serious financial crisis in the state which staggered under the heavy debts payable to the East India Company.

The Resident was sent to maintain friendly relations between the British and the Nizam and at the same time to keep a watchful eye on the Nizam's relationship with other European power, the French and native powers like the Marathas and the rulers of Mysore. The Residents influence was such that in due course he penetrated into almost

every aspect of the Nizam's Government, reducing the Nizam finally to a nominal ruler. The first British Resident to arrive in Hyderabad was John Holland in 1779. But the sixth Resident, James Achilles Kirkpatrick's eight-year term (1798-1805) in Hyderabad is considered the most eventful. The authority of the Resident grew as the company's power to interfere in the administration of the State grew. The Nizam was therefore slowly drawn consciously or unconsciously into the gambit of British Imperialism.

In course of time the Resident's relation with the Nizam was not strictly political. They freely mingled with the upper class natives and also managed to impose some of their English Customs in the society. Captain James Achilles Krikpatrick who got the magnificent Residency built, took a Hyderabadi Muslim bride Khairunissa³. He married her according to Muslim ritual and brought her to the Residency and built the Rang Mahal for her. Prior to 1800, the Residents were accommodated in one of the houses of a noble. Kirkpatrick got the permission to construct a permanent building. He was given a sixty-acre site on the river Musi by the Nizam for the construction of a new house. Kirkpatrick ran into problems for such was the frightening proportions of the plan that the Nizam on examining it, went away from the durbar agitated, for the plan for "the house was as large as the Nizam's Kingdom itself!" Later, on the advise of the minister, Meer Alum, Kirkpatrick presented the same plan on a smaller card to the Nizam who immediately signed with relief and gave his approval⁴. Phillip Davies in his book remarks that the Residency was an architectural expression of supreme power for political ends. "The Resident's authority must either be seen as it must be felt".⁵ The life of the Resident equaled the pomp of the local nobility. If the Residents imitated the lives

³ The Kirkpatrick - Khairunissa romance has suddenly come alive with the publishing of the book *White Mughals* by William Dalrymple. The setting of *White Mughals* is the British Residency now housing Osmania University's Women's College. The book has generated a renewed interest in the building and work has been started to restore the building to its former condition. While in the city recently, the author was quoted in *The Hindu* 26th November 2002 as saying that "He marvels so little has been written about Hyderabad. Nowhere else in India has the past been more neglected as in Hyderabad." He cites the destruction of large fund of material from the A.P.State Archives (damaged by rain) and the public neglect of Raymond's tomb (Saroornagar) as examples of indifference to heritage. According to him, Jagdish Mittal's exquisite collection of Mughal and Asaf Jahi miniatures and illuminated manuscripts were reportedly turned down by Salar Jung Museum. He says, "I am hoping the book will atleast generate some interest in restoring and maintaining some of these monuments and records."

⁴ M.G. Briggs, *The Nizam -His History andRelatins with the British Government*, Vol.11, Delhi, 1985 P.P.69-70.

of the Hyderabad nobility, the nobility too mimicked the life of the British Resident in course of time. This included the western style of dressing, the western food that became part of the cooking routine in the households, buying of horses and carriages, even western modes of greeting and entertainment. Kirkpatrick who mingled with the locals freely transformed protocol from cold diplomacy to an intimate relationship with the durbar. His understanding of the local traditions and use of colloquial expressions were remarkable. On one occasion when the successor of Nizam Ali Sikhandar Jah was seriously ill, he passed a bag of one thousand rupees thrice around the head of His Highness very much like a Hyderabadi to ward off the malevolent eye.

But it was this British institution that destroyed the dignity and vitality of the State. The Resident's imperialism was evident in his interference in the succession of the Nizams, in the appointment of the Diwans and in every little aspect of the administration of the State. In course of time the public began to attribute every action of the Nizam to the sinister advice of the Resident who was being called, in a rare case of bad manners of the Hyderabadi, "Kothi Ka Salaah". Dr.Ashwin K. Bakshi who has done a Doctoral work on Residency says, that the power behind the throne in the Nizam era was not any Begum, but a white man with a changing name.⁶

By mid 17th century, Hyderabad was at the height of its glory. It was a city beyond compare. Tavernier and Thevenot, European travelers who had visited most of the important cities of India including Shahjanabad and Akbarabad in the Mogul empire lavished undiluted praise on Hyderabad. Even Moghul historians described Hyderabad as a resort of heavenly peace and worldly comfort. The affluence is evident from the observation of Tavernier and Thevenot who report of 30,000 dancing girls registered on the municipal rolls and mention an annuity of over 3 'A lakh towards their welfare.⁷

⁵ Phillip Davies, *Splendours of the Raj-British Architecture in India - 1660 - 1947*, London, 1985, p-95.

⁶ Ashvin K. Bakshi, Deccan Chronicle dated 15th May, 1997 P7

⁷ Deccan Chronicle, May 1, 1997 p.5

Tavernier, a jeweler by profession was amazed at the great wealth of the Golconda Sultans. Bernier, another famous French traveller who visited several parts of Moghul India between 1656 and 1668 found Hyderabad to be one of the most beautiful cities in the east. Count Modave visited India three times between 1757 and 1777. He describes at length the city of Hyderabad. He says regarding customs,

"I have not seen any city where the customs of the capital of the empire (i.e. Delhi) more carefully followed than in the case of this one".⁸

The development of the British Indian history would have been entirely different if these princes had not extended their help to the British during those fateful days of the 'Mutiny'. They not only supplied men and money and provided shelter to British fugitives; in many cases they directly participated in the field against the enemy. Lord Canning was so impressed by their loyalty and devotion that he described these princes, as a :

"Breakwater to the storm which would otherwise have swept over us in one great wave".⁹

The strong British connection and influence slowly alienated the Nizam and the nobles from the common man. Another important factor of alienation was the economic conditions prevailing in the State of Hyderabad.

The princely state of Hyderabad with indirect British rule retained its ruling class. The ruling class was based on the Jagirdari System of the Mughal empire. Jagirs were given to nobles and other leading servants of the ruling dynasty. Although they were supposed to be transferable they soon became hereditary. Their administration was uniformly inefficient due to the system of absentee landlords and scattered nature of the Jagirs. The initiative of the Jagirdars was snatched by another landlord group-deshmukhs

⁸ K.S.S. Seshan, "Hyderabad as seen by the French Traveller, Count Modave" in K.S.S. Seshan ed. *Hyderabad-400 Saga of a City* . Hyderabad, 1993. P.54.

and they became the main base of the rural economy. The deshmukhs often owned thousands of acres of land. Most of their land was either let out on tenancy or remained fallow. The Deshmukhs combined money lending with landlordism. Their role became more important with the introduction of the requirement that land revenue must be paid in cash. The life and activities of the deshmukhs created hatred among the lesser peasants and created a grave situation. The economy was further worsened with the advent of the World War II. "Total victory, unconditional surrender and destruction of your opponents economy was the war aims of 1939-45". Certain sections of the economy were developed to meet the special needs of the war which others were allowed to decay.¹¹ The peasant always had the feeling that the Government was promoting the exploiter at the expense of exploited.

The representative body like the Chamber of Princes, (composed of representatives of small states), which was set up as a result of the Montague Chelmsford Reforms had no impact on the Nizam, Osman Ali Khan. He simply ignored it.

Osman Ali Khan, Asaf Jah VII, the last of the Nizams was born on April 6, 1886 in Hyderabad and was destined to rule his Kingdom through two World Wars, the greatest upheaval India had ever experienced. He was Mahboob Ali Khan's second child and was the Seventh Nizam. Osman Ali Khan was quite unlike his predecessors, especially the immediate one, the charismatic Mahboob Ali Pasha. In contrast to his father, Osman Ali Khan was a sober power politician, who could neither charm the masses nor the historians. The unhappy end of his reign, comprising the rule of the radical Muslim party, Ittehad-ul -Muslimeen, the Communist uprising in Telangana and the military confrontation with the Indian Union, may have contributed to the fact that this epoch to a large extent is still waiting for adequate historiographical treatment.

¹¹ Raj Kumar Prarthi & Rameswari Devi, *British colonial policy towards Indian States*. p.2.

¹⁰ Barry Pavier, *The Telangana Movement - 1944-51*, New Delhi, 1981. p4.

¹ *Ibid*, p.32

Once it became clear that the British were leaving India, the Nizam of Hyderabad was getting ready to declare himself independent of Indian Union. But a definition of an Indian State during British rule never stressed on the concept of independence of a State. An official definition of Indian States is to be found in the third schedule of Indian Act No.VII of 1871, in which it has been defined,

"As any state in India which is under the protection as political control of the Majesty's Government or of which the Government has acknowledged the supremacy of the British Crown"¹²

When Hyderabad went on appeal to the Security Council of U.N. regarding her station on remaining independent of India, the representatives of India argued that the complaint of Hyderabad was not an international question and that it was a domestic question. They affirmed that Hyderabad was a part of India and the Security Council should therefore not hear the complaint of Hyderabad.

The intention of the British Government was that the Princely States should be left free to join either with India or Pakistan, or to remain Independent, though with such statements there was usually coupled the fervent hope that these states would choose to join with one or other of the two new dominions. Prime Minister Atlee, on July 10, 1947 made a statement thus;

"With the ending of the treaties and agreements, the states regain their independence. But they are part of geographical India, and their rulers and peoples are imbibed with a patriotism no less great than that of their fellow Indians in British India. It would I think be unfortunate if, owing to the formal severance of their paramountcy relations with the crown, they were to be islands cut off from the rest of India."¹³

Raj Kumar Preeth and Rameswari Devi, *Op.Cit;* p.1

¹³Clyde Eagleton, "The case of Hyderabad before the Security Council" in ed. Omar Khalidi (cd)*Hyderabad After the fall*.Kansas, 1988, p.70

The attitude of Hyderabad towards Accession

Even before the Indian Independence Act went into force, Hyderabad had been considering becoming part of proposed new state of India. She had, indeed taken a leading part in the movement towards a Federal India in 1935, and the decision to divide India put her into a position of great difficulty. This was expressed by the Nizam in a Firman of June 11, 1947,

"The basis of division of British India is communal (i.e. religious). In my state however, the two major communities live side by side and I have sought since I became ruler, to promote by every means good and friendly relations between them....By sending representatives to either of the constituent Assemblies, Hyderabad would seem to be taking one side or the other".¹⁴

In the given situation, the Nizam signed the Standstill Agreement in 1947 with the Indian Union handing over major areas like External Affairs and Defence to Indian Union. But in course of time he came under the influence of the Razakkars and violated the terms of the stand still agreement. The word 'Razakkars' means volunteers. But they grew rapidly and became militant as danger of attack from India grew. It forced the Indian representative in the Security Council to state that

"the Nizam had become not a free agent, but a person under the control of a set of gangsters and therefore India was forced to interfere."¹⁵

Under the above guidance of Sardar Patel the Police Action was initiated against Hyderabad State on September 13th, 1948 and Hyderabad had no choice but to submit. Under the new Indian Constitution, Hyderabad was incorporated into the state of India and the Nizam submissively participated in the ceremony by which it was done. It was a successful accomplishment of the most difficult work of integration and consolidation

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 75

¹⁵ *Ibid*. P. 76

and Sardar Patel stands out as most unrivalled and even Bismarck's achievement in the active work of unification of 38 states of Germany pales into insignificance.

The next chapter deals with the political awakening in Hyderabad. The role of the Andhra Maha Sabha and Hyderabad State Congress in bringing about a political revival in Hyderabad is assessed.