

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

Muslims in India constitute about 12% of the total population of the country. In terms of absolute numbers this figure is larger than that to be found in the various Muslim countries excepting Bangladesh or Indonesia. In keeping with the regional diversities that characterize India, Indian Muslims like their Hindu brethren, do not constitute a monolithic entity. Notwithstanding a common religion, they are differentiated with well marked cultural differences which are primarily regional in character. Some of these regional characteristics have been accentuated due to historical reasons. Thus, for example, in north India the Kingdom of Avadh with its epicentre in Lucknow, promoted a typical Muslim dominated culture which had a spirit and flavour not to be found among Muslim subcultures anywhere in the country. Similar to the development of the "Lucknawi culture", the city of Hyderabad also saw the efflorescence of a very unique culture and society which came to be typified as "Daccani" but which more correctly was "Hyderabadi".

Unlike in north India, where Muslims became a dominant group because of invasions and conquests, in South India

Muslims generally entered and settled as migrants and traders. However among the few exceptions to this general situation was their dominance over Hyderabad. Here Muslims entered as rulers.

Inevitably, on account of their elitist position, they developed a distinct socio-cultural ethos. However, this distinct ethos was very different from the Indo-Muslim culture that had developed in north India as a result of more than six centuries of Mughal rule. The Deccan or Hyderabad Muslim culture was a synthesis of the royal culture of Iran, (which the Qutub Shahis had brought with them) and the Mughal culture (brought by the Mughal Subedar) and the local Hindu culture of Dravidian origin; Hindu and Muslims were equal co-sharers in it. This synthetic culture flowered considerably because of the relative harmony that existed between Muslims and Hindus in the socio-cultural and economic spheres, notwithstanding the fact that the Muslim rulers had caused a political replacement of Hindu rule. Possibly, the Muslim rulers' acceptance of and encouragement to, the local culture had a great deal to do with the development of this synthetic culture.

The fact that the Hindu subjects were generally not victimized, and were not subjected to the discriminatory

Jazia Tax, but were, instead, recruited into the Muslim army, as well as in the administrative machinery during the rule of both the Qutub Shahis and Asaf Jahis (during which periods state grants were freely received by Hindu temples), contributed to the emergence, stabilization and acceptance of this syncretic culture. Eventually, large numbers of Hindus adopted this synthesis and remained under its sway throughout the period of Muslim ascendancy in Hyderabad, which was spread over a period of almost five centuries, that is, 1518 to 1948.

The foundation of the composite Hyderabad way of life began to be shaken when the Indian sub-continent became a victim of the communal passions and violence which eventually culminated in the partition of the country. Hyderabad, as a centre of Muslim dominance and Muslim elitism, obviously could not survive in the historical form it had assumed under its two Muslim dynasties. In September, 1948, the inevitable occurred and the flag of Asaf Jahi ruler Mir Osman Ali Khan, known to the world as the fabulously wealthy Nizam, (or the richest man on earth) was replaced by the Indian tricolour. The wheel of history had turned round and Muslim dominance, which five centuries ago had replaced Hindu rule, had to make way for the re-establishment of a Hindu-based polity,

though, of course, within the secular frame work of the Indian Constitution.

While the partition of the country was, in many respects, a disaster for the Muslims of divided India, the tragedy of Hyderabad Muslims in several respects^{was} a more serious one. Unlike north Indian Muslims who had lost power to the British more than a century ago, Hyderabad Muslims continued to be the ruling elite even after India was partitioned in 1947. But following the dissolution of the Asaf Jahi dynasty in 1948, they overnight suffered a role reversal and lost their pre-eminent position in the state. Power and dominance, and along with these the society and culture that had been built over a period of five centuries rapidly vanished/disintegrated and for Hyderabad Muslims, whether they belonged to the elite class or the masses, glory evaporated into nothingness.

Loss of political and economic supremacy led to fundamental changes in Hyderabad Muslim society. Following the Police Action, and the unsavoury incidents, thereafter, Muslims took to migration, first to Pakistan and then to the West. Muslim learning, and other contributions to literature, art and culture dried off and suddenly a dynamic and vibrant culture came to a standstill. The economic decline of Muslim feudals, and the relative absence

of the professional middle class, altered the social structure and simultaneously gave rise to various socio-cultural, socioeconomic and sociopolitical problems.

But the pessimism that had seized the Muslim mind soon after Police Action, and which had led Hyderabad Muslims to believe that there was no future for them fortunately was not to last forever. Their trials and tribulations considerably receded into the background as the wider Indian society embarked on the path of modernization and development. This process, and certain international developments, helped Hyderabad Muslims to pull themselves out of the gloom that had enveloped them after 1948. Having once been a dynamic community, it gradually began to take advantage of the new opportunities that presented themselves.

In the decade of the seventies, the global phenomenon of petrodollars affluence particularly came as a boon for Hyderabad Muslims. To large segments of this community, petrodollars brought a wealth that has helped them to recreate, to a considerably extent, a past which they had once thought was entirely lost and gone. Of course, no amount of recreation of the past can fully restore what once was and the present and future will have to be an amalgam of various trends and strains with some influences

of the past.

Thus, as one surveys the Hyderabad Muslim scene, one sees a vast panorama of several interesting changes that have occurred in the life of this community over a period of about forty years or so. For the sociologists these changes are of immense interest and challenges. They need to be systematically studied both in order to understand how the forces of modernism and traditionalism intermingle in the life of a distinct community; as well as, at a more macrolevel, to understand the dynamics of the process of social change which has fascinated sociologists since the very time its founding fathers turned their attention to this interesting discipline.

The present study has attempted to fill this gap, at least partially. It was designed to take into account social change in Hyderabad Muslim society between the period 1948-85.

The fate and destiny of Indian Muslims has been affected, since partition, by two major events; one, partition itself, and, second, the oil boom of the Gulf countries. But for Hyderabad Muslims, it was not so much partition, as the Police Action of 1948 which caused a major upheaval in their hitherto sheltered existence.

Hence, no study purporting to deal with social change among these Muslims can afford to neglect an assessment of the impact of the Police Action.

Since, there exists virtually no accounts written by social scientists of this period, the present thesis has tried to fill up this gap by resorting to data collection on the basis of "oral" history. The researcher contacted a large number of senior Muslim residents of Hyderabad who had experienced those traumatic days, in order to build up an account of what happened to the traditional feudal order and how the Muslim society responded, when confronted by the forces of disintegration.

The second major change producing event was the opening up of employment opportunities in the Gulf countries. For reasons, explained later in the thesis, Hyderabad Muslims were favourably positioned to take advantage of these opportunities. The thesis has tried to examine the impact of petrodollars upon the Muslims of the city, many of whom had become victims of deep frustration in the three decades following the aftermath of Police Action.

Accordingly the specific objectives of the study were-

1. To develop an ethnographic account of the traditional culture and society of Hyderabad Muslims.

2. To describe the socioeconomic and sociocultural impact of Partition, and Police Action, upon Hyderabad Muslims.
3. To analyse the kind and extent of change and modernization that is being reflected in social life, and to evaluate the role of remittance economy in this change.
4. (Considering that change affects different social strata, differentially), to examine how different social strata of Hyderabad Muslims have responded to change.

Of course, it was not feasible in one single enquiry to make a study of all aspects of Hyderabad Muslim society. Hence, to keep the study within manageable limits, the researcher endeavoured to focus particular attention upon:

- a) Migrations, the changing occupational structure and intergenerational mobility in last four decades.
- b) The impact of petrodollars upon the social life of Hyderabad Muslims with special emphasis on changing life styles, status of woman, education and employment.

In attempting the task in hand as indicated above the thesis developed a macroview of social change in Hyderabad

Muslim society. In doing so, it went back in time and captured (and revived for its informants) old memories, which, however, needed some empirical support. To fulfil this shortcoming, survey of 160 families was also made and data was collected on some of the dimensions that had emerged in the macroview of change. The findings of this survey have been presented as "micro analysis" in the last part of the thesis.

The above would indicate that a variety of methodological strategies were utilized in bringing the thesis to fruition. (The Chapter on Methodology has dealt with this matter in detail.)

Finally it may be mentioned that the researcher herself hails from Hyderabad, and has personally witness and experienced several of the events described here. Of course many of these did not appear in the same light as they eventually did when she returned to her home-ground fortified with the perceptions and skills of a research student in Sociology. Nevertheless, she enjoyed the advantage of being an "Insider". This also helped her to overcome some of the problems which some other researcher not similarly positioned might have encountered. All in all, the work on this thesis has been a "labour of love" for her.