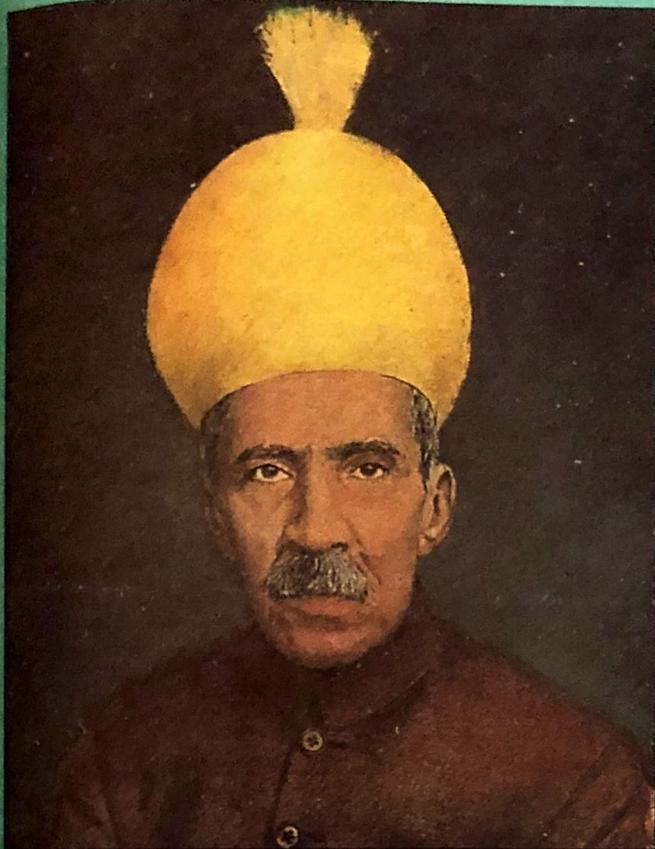


Glorious Past, Uncertain Future



The last official Nizam of Hyderabad, Mir Osman Ali Khan, once known as the richest man on earth....



And the first: Nizamul-Mulk Asaf Jah I

Hyderabad, Deccan, is one of the richest centres of Muslim history and culture. Under the Nizams, who had some likening for the British, religious harmony prevailed, architecture flourished and many major educational institutions were established. But today Hyderabad is a decaying city which offers no prospects for its young and is a prime candidate for communal riots. **Sarah Saleem** just returned from the city which the British regarded as one of their richest prize.

HYDERABAD is today a city teeming with almost three million people, most of whom are recent arrivals from all over the today's Telegu-speaking state of Andra Pradesh. It was between 1956 and 1976 that the influx occurred and because Hyderabad was planned for, and until 1956 populated by less than half a million people, it is today literally overflowing with its inhabitants. The results of this can be seen in the congested streets, where auto and cycle rickshaws vie with cars, cows, goats, bullock carts and humans in a mass of dust and filth and the economic difficulties of the people are manifesting themselves in increasing communal violence. Even the wealthier areas of the city are in reality not very impressive and sadly there is not a great deal to indicate to a modern visitor that Hyderabad was for centuries the capital of the largest and wealthiest Muslim state in India or that it possessed a significant Muslim

heritage and culture.

There have been six cities ruled by Muslim kings since 1470 in the area which now comprises the city of Hyderabad. Although strictly speaking, royal families are not looked upon with favour in Islam, practically all of the Islamic world was, during the last few centuries, ruled by one or other dynasty and India, ruled by the Moghul Emperors and various Muslim princes was no exception.

Qutb ul Mulk Deccani founded the first "Islamic" city of Hyderabad, as historians refer to it, just north of the river Musa with his courtiers who had all come with him from Persia. This city, which today is the site of the famous royal tombs, was later abandoned and the second city was founded by the Qutb Shahi kings at Golkonda Fort in 1519 just to the south. Again, at the end of the 16th century, the young king, Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, decided to build another

new city, because of the overcrowding of the fort, this time to the south of the river Musa. There is a very popular legend in Hyderabad, which is recorded by historians as fact, about the founding of this third city. The story goes that as a young prince, Muhammad Quli was enamoured by a singing girl, a Hindu who lived south of the river at a village called Chichlam and would often ride from Golkonda Fort on his horse to hear her sing. After the death of his father, the young king decided to build a new city where the village stood, but was advised against this display of youthful enthusiasm by his chief minister, Mir Muhammad Mumin. The city was still built, instead some miles to the west of the village in accordance with Hindu *Shastras* (religious laws) on city planning. These states that the city must contain a temple at its centre and thus the symbol of Hyderabad, Charminar, with its four tall, elegant



minarets was built. A mosque and a famous school of calligraphy was later established inside the building. Other famous architectural landmarks of the Qutb Shahi period include the Jami'a Mosque, the Dar ul-Shafa'a hospital and the Badshahi Meshurkhana which housed the sacred *alams* of the Muslims. The Purani Pul bridge, one of the oldest surviving bridges in the world, dates back to 1565 and was built by Muhammad Quli's father.

By the late 17th century, the Emperor Aurangzeb had taken over power in Delhi. Being a strong-willed and devout person, he determined to put an end to the rot and decadence which had crept into court life in the Moghul court and in those of Muslim princes all over India. The strong-armed methods he used have made him a controversial figure in the eyes of some, but although his intentions were good, he came at a time when the rot had set in too deeply. When he advanced south, he managed to capture Golkonda Fort and end the reign of the Qutb Shahi dynasty, but was too late to shake the courtiers and nobility out of their pleasure-loving complacency, which left them militarily weak and exposed to foreign powers who had their eyes on India.

Sometime after Aurangzeb's death, the dynasty of the Asaf Jahi Nizams was founded in the city of Hyderabad, capital of the state of Hyderabad. The first Nizam, Nizam ul Mulk Asaf Jah I had come down to Hyderabad from the imperial court at Delhi in 1724 to assume his post as vizier and had brought with him a vast retinue of courtiers, who as the nobility, served the next seven generations of Nizams who ruled Hyderabad until 1948.

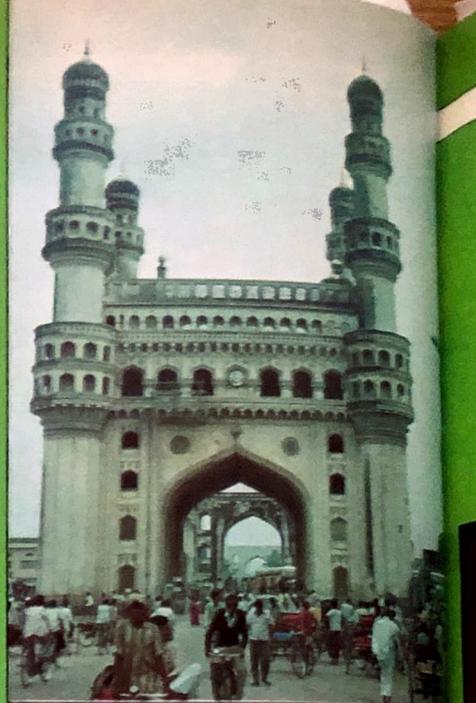
The size of Hyderabad state varied; under the first three Nizams, it expanded considerably to include much of South India, but after the British got a foothold in the sub-continent in 1798 through the East India Trading Company, the size of the state was reduced to something resembling that

of present day France.

The ruling structure of Hyderabad state was very interesting; some historians say it was a feudal society with the Nizams ruling as congenial despots but others say that it was in reality far from being oppressive. In the countryside, the *jaigirdars* – big landowners who had once been military conquerors – had hung up their swords as decoration pieces and lived a life of luxury collecting their revenues from the peasantry.

At the court, Muslims and Hindus occupied hereditary posts in the administration and government with executive posts being given mainly to the Muslims, although there was no fixed rule about this. In the late 19th century, Nizam Mahbub Ali Pasha had a battle of wills with the British Resident in Hyderabad to have Maharaja Krishen Pershad, his trusted advisor, appointed as his *dewan* (prime minister) and succeeded in 1901, after which the Maharaja served his king loyally until the latter's death. The point to be made is that the Muslim Nizams not only showed the greatest tolerance towards the Hindu population, who to be fair, constituted the majority of the people, but also trusted and relied upon their services and this resulted in the greatest degree of religious harmony between the two communities during the rule of the Nizams.

A darker side of the Nizams' rule, and one which has made them justifiably unpopular with Indian nationalists of the 19th and 20th centuries, was their complacent acceptance and support of the British Raj in India. From the early 19th century, the Nizams complied demurely with British demands that they pay for the upkeep of the Hyderabad contingent of the British Army in India, stationed in Secunderabad. Sometimes, the British demanded that whole districts of the Hyderabad state be turned over to them in lieu of payment. It was in such a way that the British Viceroy



The Raj quartet: Viceroy, Lord Curzon and Nizam Mahboob Ali Khan with courtiers. And how the six Hyderabad looked on the map (bottom right).



appropriated the district of Berar from the fifth Nizam, Afzul Dawla, threatening him with military action when he refused to sign the treaty. Later, in 1902, the Viceroy Curzon demanded that Mahbub Ali Pasha lease Berar to the British in perpetuity. It is recorded that in the meetings which took place between the two parties, the Nizam was not allowed to have a single advisor with him and after two days closeted with the British delegation, eventually succumbed to their demand. Mahbub Ali Pasha was later 'rewarded' by being made a Knight Grand Cross of Bath, the GCB, which the Nizam used to refer to sarcastically as 'Grave Curzon Berar'.

But although the Nizams did unfortunately show much weakness in the face of British manipulations, they did much that was to their credit, especially in the sphere of education. In 1853, the Nizamiya Islamic University was established near Charminar and under



Hyderabad as it is today (extreme left). Landmarks of the past: Char Minar (above left), old palace (above) and Golkonda Fort (below left).

most important for students to learn Persian (which, until the late 19th century, was the language of the court) and English, the significance of which is obvious.

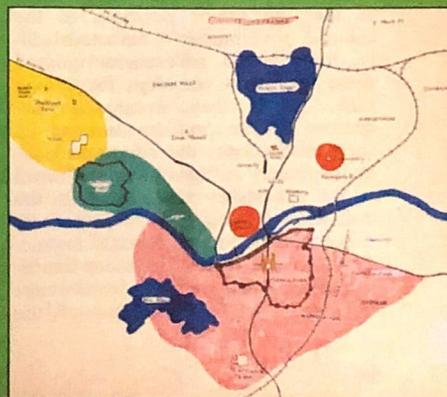
The Nizams also funded a system of grants for students who wished to go abroad for higher studies. As a result of this educational network, a wide class of educated Muslims and Hindus, able to serve the state and well-versed in Urdu, Persian and even Arabic literature was created. It was at the turn of the last century that Urdu replaced Persian as the language of the court, it being a melodious mixture of Arabic, Persian and local Hindi.

Architectural legacies of the Nizams include the typically Moghul gardens called the *Baagh-e-Aam* in the city, innumerable palaces such as *Falaknuma*, *Iram Manzil*, *King Kothi*, *Purani Haveli* and the walled city around Charminar, with its 12 enormous gates in which the grand residences of the nobility once stood. Stories of the massive wealth and intriguing court life of the Nizams are, of course, legion in Hyderabad and many have been recorded in a fascinating book, *The Days of the Beloved* by H.R. Lynton and Mohini Rajan.

Since 1948 the Hyderabad state has become part of secular India. In Hyderabad itself, there are no doubt mixed feelings about the new order and many of the Muslims who saw no future for themselves in the new India made their feelings known during the traumatic early years of independence by emigrating to the newly-created

Muslim state of Pakistan. Interestingly, the Maulana Maududi, the leaders of a fundamentalist political organisation, Jamat-i-Islami, was one of those to emigrate from the Hyderabad state. However, on the whole, it is probably fair to say that it is only the minority of Muslims (and a number of Hindus) who benefitted from the rule of the Nizams, who feel a nostalgia for the old days. Certainly many Muslims must regret the fact that a state in which Muslim culture and traditions for centuries flourished, has become the centre of a Telegu-speaking state in which the culture and lifestyle of the Telegana people has become predominant. It is also regrettable that in a democratic country, where minorities should have the right to protection, there is no longer the religious harmony which existed for centuries under the Muslim rulers. The past few years have seen an alarming rise in communal violence, fanned by the fanatical speeches of Hyderabad Chief Minister, N.T. Rama Rao, culminating in the sickening rioting of 1983 and 1984. In the main period of the rioting last year, in September, official figures put the number of dead at around 1,000 and the actual figure is in all probability much higher. Everyday occurrences of discrimination against Muslims in education and in professional life add fuel to the religious tensions. Economic difficulties no doubt add to the feelings of bitterness, especially in the poorer areas, but in fact poverty is only one component of the problem. It is not surprising therefore that those professionally skilled Muslims able to leave Hyderabad to find haven elsewhere have done so almost *en masse*.

Those Muslims who have remained in Hyderabad will have to take positive action and make full use of the democratic political institutions at their disposal and not look back at the past, in order to ensure a secure existence as Indian Muslims in the future. ■



Nizam Mahbub Ali Pasha (1869-1911), the first Muslim Girls College in the whole of the Indian sub-continent was founded, enabling a large number of girls to graduate in many subjects including medicine. Although this was a Muslim college in name and all the girls were in purdah (ie veiled), about two-thirds of the graduates were Hindus reflecting the fact of 80% Hindu majority of the state. Osmania Medical College, renowned throughout the whole of India and Engineering and Veterinary Colleges were also set up at the end of the last century. In 1919, Osmania Medical College was expanded to include a full university teaching the full range of subjects. Many famous grammar schools, such as All Saints and Stanley, were also set up by the Nizam's chief educational advisor, Salar Jung I.

From the time these colleges were founded, the language of instruction was Urdu and it was also considered