

# **Summary Report**

## **A Study of**

### **Communal Conflict and Peace Initiatives in Hyderabad: Past and Present**

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## **Part I**

### **Communal Conflict and Peace Initiatives in Hyderabad Deccan: The Historical Context Research: M.A. Moid**

**The acceptance of communalism as a major problem of Indian society, especially in the last decade has become wide spread. Many efforts were made to understand it on various levels. The communal conflicts and riots are related to the socio-economic and political issues whereas communalism also has historical causes. The issues of colonial policies, modernization, mass politics, competition, identity and culture etc, add to the complexity of the problem.**

**Historical reasons do play a role in a place like Hyderabad, which has a long history spreading over four centuries. The study of history is necessary since it exposes the myths surrounding Hindu Muslim relationships. The immediate history of last five decades is particularly very significant to understand the communal problem of Hyderabad. In the following pages an attempt has been made to show the historical roots of communal conflict in Hyderabad.**

#### **Arrival of Muslims in the Deccan**

The Deccan region witnessed the arrival of Muslims in the period of Sultan Allauddin Khilji. Allauddin Khilji's policies influenced the political social and economic life of people in Deccan. This was further strengthened by the policy of Sultan Md. Bin Tughlak, (1325 to 1352 A.D.), when he decided to shift his capital from Delhi to Daulatabad. Many of the inhabitants of Delhi and the North left their homes and migrated to Daulatabad. These immigrants established many institutions, which had close resemblance with those in Delhi. With this a new chapter began in the socio political and cultural history of Deccan.

#### **The Bahmanis Of Gulbarga**

Hassan Gangu founded the Bahmani kingdom. The Bahmanis ruled for nearly 170 years through 18 kings, without any dynastic changes by their adoption of the Hindu system of lineal succession. It assured security to the people and provided the necessary conditions under which the art and culture thrived and there was all round development.

Along with foreign influences we find the native Hindus also influencing the cultural structure of the Bahmanis. The twenty-two years period between the death of Muhammad I and the accession of Firoz are a period of struggle between the cultures and attempts at a synthesis of Hindu cultural elements and the

foreign influences represented by the afaqis who were mostly Iranians and Iraqis and the northern or the Tughlak tradition represented by the 'Dakhnis'.

But after the death of Feroz, Ahmad Shah Wali Bahmani (1422-1436), his successor changed the course of the Bahmani history as he "reversed the policy of his predecessors by giving preference in his administrative appointment to foreigners over Indian nobles."

**Role of Sufis:** The Sufis also had a strong influence in shaping the culture and community relations in the Deccan.. They not only played an important role for the commoners but also for the nobility. It is said that Nizam-Ud-Din Auliya of Delhi had deputed a few of his murids and Khulafa to Daulatabad much before it was converted to a capital by Mohammad Bin Tughlaq. As a result Muslim settlements consisting of Turks, Afghans, and Persians came into existence. When the capital was shifted to Daulatabad many Sufis also migrated from Delhi to Deccan, and laid the foundation for the Sufi influences and the emerging socio cultural forms.

**Bhakti Movement:** Hinduism in the south was divided into two main sects- Saivism and Vaishnavism. Both these sects laid stress on "spiritual equality of all castes, the worship of idols, pilgrimages, suppression of desires, devotion and respect for animal life". The Bhakti movement that was led in the South by Shankaracharya, Nathamuni, Ramanuja and Nimbarka was aimed at reforming the Hindu society. The impact of Islam was most discernible in the Lingayat movement, which was started in Karnataka by Basava in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. Like the Bhakti movement, it advocated one God, and condemned rituals and discrimination on the basis of caste. This movement spread with rapidity during the Bahmani period. (*History of South India*, Vol.II. Ed: P.N.Chopra & Others pp-195-198.)

**Hindu Sacred Places:** It is generally believed that Muslims destroyed temples wherever they went with religious intentions. The situation in Deccan presents a different picture. In spite of the ravages of Allauddin Khilji and Malik Kafur in the Deccan and the continuous rule of the Bahmanis, Bahmani successor states, Mughals and Asaf Jahs, lasting totally seven centuries, the vast monuments of ancient Deccan remained intact. Thus it can be seen that the common life in Bahmani Kingdom was devoid of religious strife. Both religious groups allowed each other's influences to take root. This attitude helped in the emergence of a composite culture.

**Vijayanagar Empire:** Both Vijayanagar Empire and Bahmani Kingdom influenced each other. The Bahmanis were Muslims and Vijayanagar Kings were Hindus. Most of the time they were in conflicting relation with each other. Their conflicts and cooperation influenced the cultural environment of the day. The important point to be noticed is that despite their conflicts they did not mistreat the people of other faiths. This shows that the strife was political and not religious. Devaraya's (1425-1447 A.D.) decision to have Muslims in his army is one of the many examples of the attitudes of the times to the Hindu-Muslim situations. At the same time he ordered the construction of mosque in the capital and allowed the Muslims freedom to carry on their religious duties without any hindrances.

Bahmani Kingdom reached its zenith when Mahmood Gawan was Prime Minister. After Mahmood Gawan's death the political equilibrium which had been created was rudely upset with the result that the Bahmani Kingdom disintegrated into five independent principalities viz., the Adil Shahi dynasty of Bijapur, the Imad Shahi dynasty of Berar, the Nizam Shahi dynasty of Ahmad Nagar, the Qutub Shahi dynasty of Golkonda, and the Barid Shahi dynasty of Bidar. The cultural life in these five kingdoms was influenced by their new policy of closeness to the locals that led to the furtherance of cultural synthesis. Their approaches and

perspectives also influenced the contemporary Mughal Empire under Akbar. Out of these five, two kingdoms of Bijapur and Golkonda became prominent in cultural synthesis.

**Political Cooperation:** When the governor of Deccan, Malik Bahauddin revolted against Delhi, he was given shelter by Kampili Kingdom. When Hasan Gangu revolted against Delhi, Kapaya Nayaka assisted him with a contingent of 15000 infantry. In the wars of Bhamanis, the Vellama chieftans of Nalgonda became allies of Bahmanis where as Kapaya and other Reddy kings of coastal areas later became ally of Rayas of Vijayanagar.

These political situations of 100 years changed the nature of reaction patterns of Hindus, which were basically against new invading forces, that is, Muslims. It was realized by the people that in these dynastic fights religion played a secondary role, secondly Muslims have become a new social reality to be accepted. This changed the attitude of natives towards Muslim government and the Muslims.

**The Adil Shahi Sultans** of Bijapur did not interfere in the life of the Hindus who carried on their avocations without any hindrance. The caste system was observed rigorously and Brahman, the priestly class, enjoyed special privileges. The cordial relations between Hindus and Muslims continued even after the rise of Shivaji, who employed large number of Muslims in the army. On the other hand, the Marathas served the Adil Shahis with loyalty and devotion and extended the sway of Adil Shahi kingdom to distant lands. The socio-cultural life of the people in the Deccani states was based on common understanding. This admixture of different cultures of the land resulted in what is known as Deccani culture.

**The Qutub Shahis:** Qutub Shahis ruled for 175 years (1512 – 1687A.D) through 7 kings. The Qutub Shahis were based in Telangana.

After the death of Jamsheed Quli Shah, the 3<sup>rd</sup> ruler, power struggle among the nobles began. “Some of them, headed by the minister, Jagadeva Rao, and supported by all the Naikwaris (Hindu Soldiery) invited Ibrahim, the youngest brother of Jamsheed, who was taking shelter at Vijayanagar for 7 years when RamaRaj was the ruler. Ibrahim returned to Golkonda and became the ruler. This shows the nature of Hindu Muslim relationship existing at that time.

Ibrahim and Mohammed Quli Qutub Shah strengthened this environment along with other kings. The next period of 40 years led by Ibrahim’s son and grandson is an era of peace, prosperity and cultural synthesis. His son Mohammed Quli, who was the son of Bhagirati, Ibrahim’s wife and princess of Vijayanagar, succeeded Ibrahim.

The Muslims participated in the Hindu festivals of Ugadi, Holi, Diwali, Sankranti, and Basant etc. Mohammed Quli even wrote several poems on all these festivals. On the other hand Hindus also participated in Muslims religious occasions, particularly those connected to Shia faith. In this aspect, ‘Ashurkhana’ (the place to keep war relics of Prophet’s grandson) played an important role. The replicas, called ‘Pirs’ in Telugu were found practically in every village and town in the Qutub Shahi Kingdom.

**Language, Culture and Jurisprudence:** The Muslim Scholars, Sufis, Poets and even the Sultans adapted Deccani as their medium. The Language itself was a happy combination of all the languages spoken during the period by the foreign immigrants as well as the local people. Ibrahim Adil shah of Bijapur even adopted Deccani as the Court Language. The Sufis of the Deccani Kingdoms, especially of Bijapur and Golkonda, adopted this language for their works. The Qutub Shahs also patronized the local dances. Qutub Shahis showed no discrimination between the Hindus and Muslims in the matter of appointments to high posts. They also paid equal attention to the administration of justice. Sufis, Kazis and Hindu Pundits were invited

to attend the courts of justice and give their judgments according to their respective religious laws. The Hindus not only enjoyed full security of life and property but also had freedom of conscience. There is no authority to prove that forcible conversions to Islam took place on a large scale in the Kingdom of Golkonda. In spite of the heterogeneity, the culture, which bound the society, was based on religious tolerance, broad mindedness and humane outlook. The Muslims and Hindus borrowed heavily from each other's cultural traditions. The literature, architecture, social and religious rituals and ceremonies of the period thus show a happy fusion of foreign and local traditions.

Thus the socio-cultural life of the people during the Qutub Shahs was marked by a spirit of broad – mindedness and catholicity based on sharing and adopting of mutual traditions and customs. In such environments inter religious conflicts could not have existed, and even if existed it was controlled and solved immediately with the help of efficient administration and common culture. The emergence of composite culture is necessary for integration and conflict resolution in societies. The Qutub Shahis did this successfully.

**Asaf Jahs of Hyderabad- Phase I (1724 – 1800 A.D.):** The kingdom of Bijapur was annexed into the Mughal Empire by Aurangzeb in 1686 A.D, and Golkonda in 1687 A.D. After the death of Aurangzeb the forces of disintegration, once again raised their heads. Mir Qamaruddin, who later became the first Nizam and founded the Asaf Jahi dynasty, was twice the governor of Deccan. The Asaf Jahi dynasty ruled for 224 years (1724 – 1948 A.D) with 7 kings. Mir Qamaruddin also called as Nizam-ul- Mulk, laid a clear policy about Hindu Muslim harmony, which all the subsequent kings followed.

As a whole the Asaf Jahi dynasty is known for cultural achievements and Hindu Muslim closeness, even though there were alleged instances of discrimination. The socio-cultural achievement of Qutub Shahis facilitated the emergence of Hindu-Muslim relationship in Asaf Jahs time. This process in the earlier phase continued on its own despite the fact that the kings were busy in wars and administration.

**Society:** During the early rule of Asaf Jahi dynasty, the highest posts concerning revenue and civil administration were entrusted to Hindus. These Hindu officials were held in highest esteem and enjoyed the same privileges as their brethren and were included among the highest nobles of the state. The contact of different communities with each other helped in the process of cultural assimilation and led to synthesis of culture.

**1857 & Freedom struggle:** The first war of independence, led by Bahadur Shah, was mostly conducted under the guidance of dispossessed feudal lords and discontented sepoys. In the south, it could not evoke proper response because Salar Jung and the 5<sup>th</sup> Nizam, Afzal-ud-daula remained steadfast in their friendship to the British. Some effects of the Mutiny are felt in the Hyderabad state, in the shape of a raid by some soldiers against the Residency and a rebellion by the Gonds in the Adilabad district. All these rebellions against the English later become the basis for the emergence of mass movements since it created a consciousness in the people. The educational systems introduced by the British also brought new ideas and a new world was opened to the people. Many of these early revolts, like the Wahabi revolt, were initiated by the Muslims but later Hindus also joined in large numbers.

**First Public Agitation:** The first public agitation in Hyderabad is known as Chanda Railway Scheme agitation, according to which, an agreement was made between Indian Government and the Government of Hyderabad in 1870, to construct a railway line from wadi on the Madras – Bombay route, to Hyderabad. A rumour was spread that the scheme was unremunerative and would result in a great financial loss to the State. The elite of Hyderabad city formed “the committee to consider the chanda railway scheme”. Two important members were Dr. Aghornath Chattopadhyaya, principal of Nizam College, and Mulla Abdul

Qayum, a senior civil servant. The committee requested the government to place before the public the full details of the scheme. For the first time such a request was made to the government. The Chanda Railway Scheme agitation was the first landmark in the mass politics of Hyderabad. It was the beginning of the growth of public awakening and participation in Hyderabad.

**Religious Policy and Communal Conflict:** In the period of Afzal ud dawla, Hindu and Muslim closeness increased because of the events of 1857. When Salar Jung was the Prime Minister, this policy of tolerance continued and Claude Campbell “in Glimpses of the Nizam’s Dominions” writes “There is no state in India under a Hindu or Mohomedan ruler, where greater toleration is shown towards the various religions than there is in Hyderabad”. Thus the policy of religious tolerance of Nizam ul Mulk was continued, but during the reign of Mir Mahaboob Ali Khan there was a gradual departure from this policy. The government imposed some restrictions on the observance of Hindu festivals particularly when Hindu and Muslim festivals coincided. It created discontentment and a feeling of uncertainty among the Hindus of the state. These restrictions were imposed in order to avoid the danger of conflicts, but instead of averting, these restrictions created the possibility of conflicts.

**Arya Samaj:** In this background Arya Samaj was established in Hyderabad in 1892. Though its aim was religious reform but it strayed into politics. Its activities before 1900 were non-political and related to lecturing and public contact. Its lectures created strong reactions in Muslims and in Sanatani Hindus since they believe in idol worship. From 1892 A.D onwards they conducted not only public lectures but also debates with Sanatanists, causing tensions in Hindus and Muslims. As a result the Government imposed restrictions and deported their preachers.

**Ganesh Utsav:** In 1895 first Ganesh Utsav celebrations on a public scale were held in Hyderabad, which were started in Maharashtra under the inspiration of Bal Gangadhar Tilak. This utsav was a part of growing nationalist movement but in Hyderabad it got associated with the Arya Samaj and its activities. These added to the confusions of Government as well as the general public. The initiatives of the Nizam Government in this regard and Hindu responses were arousing suspicions and tensions in each other causing the intensifications of antagonism and bitterness.

**Asaf Jahs of Hyderabad –Phase II (1900 – 1947 A.D.):** The period starting from 1900 saw the emergence of movements, organizations, parties, agitations, unions, newspapers, colleges, social reforms, mass contacts, public awakening, peoples participation, pressure groups, various demands and expectations, compromises, challenges and intrigues. In other words medieval society was giving way to new trends leading to modern society and polity. This period of five decades witnessed success, achievements and gains, failures, tragedies and losses at all levels of society. Hindu-Muslim relationship was also an important area, which was affected seriously. This section deals with the events that had a direct impact on Hindu Muslim relationship and composite culture and it will also help in the understanding the genesis of communalism in Hyderabad

Mir Osman Ali Khan became the king in 1911, The Seventh Nizam, at the age of 27. His personality was as important as any decisive event of this period since his decisions, policies, attitudes, habits, likes and dislikes affected all the major events.

**Religious Policy:** When Osman Ali Khan became the King in 1911 he articulated his glorious and famous religious policy, which can be characterized as “love towards all”, But in 1917 Dasserah and Mohurram coincided and again circulars imposing restrictions on Hindus were issued to be followed by similar circulars later. These circulars intensified frustration in Hindus since many administrative hurdles were created, where as no such instructions were imposed on Muslims. The government seemed to face a dilemma. On the one hand if government allows religious freedom, it becomes a vehicle for freedom

movement – and Nizam was a British ally. If it controls the Hindus then it will be alleged to practice discrimination. In this situation it also played with the idea of supporting Muslim communalism. As a result Majlis and Bahadur Yar Jung was supported. From its perspective, the Nizam Government thought that it is dealing with the law and orders situation only and was not against Hindus as such. It was confident that as a committee consisting of all Hindus drafted all these circulars, these would not go against Hinduism and antagonize Hindus. But in reality the effects of these circulars on Hindus were different and they interpreted it as Muslim government's anti-Hindu attitude.

In this background Arya Samaj intensified its activities. Its unwritten aim became giving tough resistance to the government and uniting Hindus against restrictions on religious freedom. This demanded opening of many branches and recruitment of activists. Two important developments further stimulated Arya Samaj. First the activities of Siddiq Dindar in 1929, who declared himself as the 'Avatar of Chenna Basweshwar', and belittled the avatars of Rama and Krishna. This provoked Arya Samaj and they started calling preachers from the North to counter Dindars. Arya Samajis and Dindars continued their propaganda aggressively and caused not only irritation but also rumours, which became devastating to Hindu-Muslim relationship. The second development was the emergence of Majlis-E-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen on the scene in 1927 and its policy of conversions to increase Muslim population under the leadership of Bahadur Yar Jung in 1930. Arya Samaj as a reaction intensified its shuddhi and reconversion doctrine. These factors increased misunderstanding and mutual suspicions. The communal feeling took roots and tensions started building. As a result the Government took strong measures and imposed restrictions on Arya Samaj's activities and leaders.

**Communal Clashes:** In 1936 at Humnabad, a communal clash between Arya Samaj and Muslims broke out. In 1937 Government issued circular-37 banning all kinds of meetings. Arya Samaj protested by making celebrations without prior permission. In 1938 a communal riot broke out in Gulbarga when colour was thrown on a Muslim on the occasion of Holy. In the same year a riot took place in Udgir during Dassera celebrations.

In Hyderabad the first communal riot took place in Dhulpet area on 16<sup>th</sup> April 1938 and created acute unrest in the city. According to one source (Ashutosh Varshney) it was between Arya Samaj and Dindars on the issue of conversions. But according to another (Ratna Naidu), a procession of Majlis was attacked by Arya Samajis.

According to Arya Samajis only Hindus were arrested and so they decided to fight the Government through *Satyagraha*. Arya Samaj convened a conference at Sholapur on this issue and called to observe a country wide "Hyderabad Day" to highlight the situation in Hyderabad. As a result many responded to the call of

Arya Samaj and they started coming to Hyderabad to participate in the *satyagraha*. On 24<sup>th</sup> October 1938, the *satyagraha* was launched and continued till 21 July 1939. In this *satyagraha* 12,000 *satyagrahis* were arrested, out of which only 5000 belonged to Hyderabad State. The situation was never peaceful in Hyderabad state after this *Satyagraha*. Many small incidents occurred in the areas of Marathwada, Karnataka and in Nizamabad of Telangana.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of December 1942 the shops of the Hindus were looted at Gulbarga to ensure that they were paralysed financially so that they may not patronize the Samaj activities. No steps were taken by the Government to punish the real wrong-doers or to root out such tendencies" (*The Freedom Struggle in Hyderabad Vol.IV*, p. 95). This shows the changing nature of communal riots, which did not remain spontaneous but became an organised affair. The responses of the Government in 30's and 40's were similar to the responses of the Government in 80's and 90's-only the tables were turned.



**Vandemataram Movement:** In the arrested Satyagrahis of Arya Samaj, Ramchandra Rao became famous as 'Vandemataram RamchandraRao'. He used to sing Vandemataram instead of prayers in jail, even though he was given punishment for it. This song was also sung by the students of Osmania University to which university authorities objected. This brief movement was supported by Gandhi, Nehru and Bose, and within a short period spread to all parts of Hyderabad. This movement intensified the feelings in youth against the Nizam and British. (*The Asif Jahs of Hyderabad*, Rajendra Prasad, p. 254).

**Freedom Movement** When Mahatma Gandhi announced his Non-cooperation and Swadeshi through Non-violent methods the movement spread like wild fire all over India. Its influence was felt in Hyderabad also. The public meetings of the Khilafat movement became the events for introducing Hyderabad to the National Politics. Totally six meetings were conducted in 1920 on the issue of Khilafat in Hyderabad where speeches stressing communal unity were made by prominent leaders. This movement proved to be a strong influence in Hyderabad and especially among the Muslims. It united Hindus and Muslims. Arya Samaj took active part in the Khilafat meetings.

**Congress:** The intellectuals of Hyderabad welcomed the formation of Hyderabad Congress in 1938 and Mulla Abdul Qayyum was the first person in Hyderabad to join the Indian National Congress. The government of the Nizam prohibited the formation of State Congress. After an extensive struggle for 7 years the ban was lifted in April 1946. The other development during this period was the emergence of communal view of history, which created suspicions behind many day-to-day events, traditions and practices.

**Political Awakening:** People in three linguistic regions of Nizam state were interested in improving their conditions. Hence, Karnataka Parishad (1934), Maharashtra Parishad (1937) and Andhra Mahasabha (1921) were formed to pressurize the government for responsible governance and reforms. Mean while, the period from 1930 to 1944 under the leadership of Bahadur Yar Jung saw the Majlis emerging as a strong party and sole representative of Muslims of Hyderabad. But the Majlis under the leadership of Kasim Razvi, from 1946 to 1948 was remembered in the History of Hyderabad for his fanaticism, Razakars (Volunteers) and aggressive approaches. His anti Indian stand, aggressive policies and communalism became one of the main causes of latter day Police Action.

In the early days, till the 1940's, the Indian National Congress refused to take up the struggle of the people against the "Princes and Nawabs" of the native states. This also left the field free for the Arya Samajists to come forward as the champions of the struggle against autocracy and enabled them to divert the democratic awakening of the people, to a considerable extent, on to communal lines.

**Overt Communalism:** In Hyderabad the bases of overt communalism originated in the 30s and 40s.. The Mulki and Non-Mulki movement, though non-communal, lead to the emergence of community consciousness in Hindus and Muslims. Nizam's autocratic rule and various restrictions on Hindu community contributed enormously to it. This situation was exploited by organizations like Majlis and Arya Samaj leading to the further intensification of community consciousness.

The Razakars, a militant wing of Majlis, headed by Kasim Razvi were in favour of independent Hyderabad and indulged in extreme activities of killing and looting in some areas. Since the victims were mostly Hindus and the Razakars were Muslims inspired by the ideology of a Muslim State headed by a Muslim ruler, it created deep insecurities and apprehension in the Hindus. The situation became charged and highly communal. The period from January 1948 to August 1948 experienced the lowest level of cordiality between Hindus and Muslims and led to strong antagonism for each other.

**Telangana Struggle:** The communist movement strengthened its roots in three areas of Hyderabad State, beginning from 1946, as a reaction to oppressive systems of feudalism, which not only pauperized the peasants but also regularly exploited them. It did not mobilize the people on communal lines. Affected peasants - whether Hindus or Muslims were a part of this movement. Nizam Government used to send Razakars and police to protect the landlords and punish the communists. This movement puts the Hindu Muslim relationship in an entirely different context in the rural areas, which were non-communal and secular as against in urban areas, influenced by Majlis and Arya Samajs' politics.

**Revival of Communal Parties to Counter the Communists:** The appearance of communists as the only oppositions in the first elected parliament of 1952 is the proof of its mass popularity. In Telangana region the communists got maximum number of votes and three seats were won from the old city of Hyderabad as well, becoming a strong influence in the city of Hyderabad. But after the growth of the organizations like Tameer – e- Millat, Jamaat – e – Islami, Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat etc and after the revival of Majlis in 1957 (after a ban for 9 years) the scene in Hyderabad changed and went in favor of fundamentalist positions.

## Hyderabad After 1947

The period starting from 1947 signifies a new phase in the history of Hyderabad. In this period the feudal pattern of Hyderabad society gave way to a modern democratic pattern. The power structures, politics and social hierarchies changed completely. The effects of these changes were drastic for the Muslims of Hyderabad. The reactions of Muslims to these circumstances created an equally strong reaction in the Hindu community leading to the creation of fertile grounds for communal conflict and hatred.

### **Police Action:**

The Police Action by the Government of India in September 1948 through which it overthrew the Nizam Government and co-opted the Hyderabad State into the Indian Union proved disastrous for the Muslims. The Muslims 'suffered a very rapid and visible decline within a decade or so after that (Police Action)'. There was a 'state of uncertainty and loss of the Muslims confidence and anger'. These circumstances affected the Hindu Muslim relationship in Hyderabad in a drastic way and a new phase of communal conflict and violence began. The period of communal conflict and violence in last five decades can be divided into three phases "an uneasy communal calm (1948-57); the re-emergence of communal violence (from 1957 to the mid-1970s) and institutionalized communal polarization and unrelenting Communal Carnage (since 1978)". (Varshney p. 204).

**Other Causes:** The circumstances surrounding the event of Police Action provide a broader context to the communalism of the recent times. But there are other specific causes, which directly and indirectly contribute to the communal conflicts in the city of Hyderabad.

**Changing Demography:** One cause is the changing demographic pattern of Hyderabad. Due to large-scale migration of Hindus from rural areas, the percentage of Muslims in Hyderabad started reducing drastically. This changing demographic situation resulted in the friction between the two communities apart from a rise in ghettos and slums. Furthermore, it also created fear in Muslims making them a defensive minority.

**Communalisation of politics** occurred in Hyderabad in two phases. "The first was the aggressive consolidation of Congress hegemony immediately after the Police action. The minority (mainly Muslim) communities were wooed - in order to cut into the vote banks of the hitherto well established left parties, thereby communalising politics - In the second phase, The emergence of the Jan Sangh, as a counter to the Muslim communal party, the Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimin was facilitated by the delimitation of constituency boundaries, which inadvertently created Hindu vote banks in Muslim areas. The second phase also saw the rise of factionalism in-fighting within the congress" (Ratna Naidu, p.118.). Thus 'instead of providing an associational space for Hindu-Muslim engagement, the MIM and the Hindu nationalist have split Hindus and Muslims'.

**Gulf Migration:** The Muslims' immigration to middle east, starting from the 1970's, after the economically difficult decades of 1950s and 1960s resulted in economic prosperity. The Muslims then tried to enter into different trades. The Hindus who were already in those fields and in most cases dominating felt insecure. This insecurity and growing competition with Muslim newcomers resulted in ill will and jealousy. These emotions and feelings were converted into hatred for Muslims. On the other hand the money from the Gulf was accompanied with the puritanical Wahabi ideology. This encouraged the revivalist trend. The spreading Islamisation resulted in the support of Madarsas and Mosques, especially after the demolition of Babri Masjid. The composite culture of Hyderabad was its greatest victim. Similarly religious revivalist trends were present significantly among the Hindus. The number of Mosques and Mandirs is an interesting parameter to judge this trend. "In 1917 there were 222 places of worship - 164 mosques and 58 temples - in

walled city. In 1981, these have risen to 388 places of worship, 222 of them being mosques and the remaining 166 temples". (Ratna Naidu p.123).

**Politicisation of Religious Festivals:** The growing religiosity and communalism resulted in mass reorganization of festivals and procession routes. In Hyderabad, every year, three major processions are organized. The Bonalu procession is a ritual of the indigenous population originated much before the Qutub Shahi period. The Muharram procession was established by Qutub Shahi kings and observed by Shia Muslims. The third is the Ganesh Procession, which has a history in Hyderabad since 1892.

The Moharram procession retained its original character, whereas the Ganesh and the Bonalu procession have undergone considerable change. "In 1980, a Ganesh Utsav Samithi was formed under the leadership of prominent Hindu religious and political leaders. "During the 1980 Ganesh Festival, the Samithi, whose other active participants were the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Hindu Raksha Samithi, the RSS activists and some of the local businessmen, took up the task of bringing together all the old city processions to form a single, monolithic procession" (Ratna Naidu, p.129). In response to Ganesh Procession the Muslim communalists came up with the new 'Panka' procession. It was organised by MIM (as part of the annual death ceremony – *Urs* – of two saints at Nampally) and taken out just three days before the Ganesh procession, which add sufficient tensions to the vulnerable environment. These processions have also caused many violent communal riots. For some years now, the Majlis has stopped organising the Pankha procession though the Ganesh procession continues unabated every year.

**Ascendance and Communalisation of Lower Castes:** Another factor contributing to the communal conflicts of Hyderabad is the social change and mobility in lower castes. Muslims always looked down these castes –Bhoois, Lodhas, Pardis, Vadars, Gaulees, Lambadas and Munoor Kapu. They are moving up the social scale and are in Government services in mostly lowest rungs. With this they have acquired a sense of dignity and pride. They have bitter memories from the past, and now harbor thoughts of revenge. They are in the forefront of aggressive Hindu politics in Hyderabad, ready to communally combat Muslim communalism. They have been communally active on their own, though they are often mobilized and used by larger Hindu communal organizations..

## Part II

### Communal Conflict and Harmony in Hyderabad Deccan:

#### *The Present Scenario*

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#### Introduction

apid growth of communalism all over the world. Even the ‘secular’ states of the West are now taking on the shape of Christian theocracies. This is also being reflected in India at present, with the BJP ascribing their loss in the election to their movement away from Hindutva and the vision of the Hindu state. Quite apart from the headline grabbing news of violence and atrocities from flashpoints across the country, there is reason to believe that there is a growth of communalism in day-to-day life, and that the feeling of alienation between Hindus and Muslims has never been so great as it is today. Hyderabad is a good place to look at these issues, both because of a history of communal conflict, and a consistent tradition of a movement against these trends.

Peaceful co-existence may seem to be quite a straightforward concept but there is a kind of peace which one might call a ‘silent peace;’ distinguishing it from another, a ‘vibrant’ one. A silent peace is akin to a ‘law and order’ approach – with the state playing a dominant role through the police, and the use of ‘intelligence’. ‘Vibrant’ peace is a situation when a rational dialogue is possible between contesting viewpoints without intention of causing harm or fearing. We are very far from a situation of ‘vibrant’ peace today in Hyderabad, though we could probably claim that for the most part there is a ‘silent peace’.

But there is no denying that a movement towards a ‘vibrant’ peace is desirable and that the people most qualified to scrutinize the situation in an ethical way are those individuals who have actively worked to build the peace.

In this study, we have tried to identify people who are known to be peace-builders, and find out what they think are the underlying reasons for the tension. We present their notions about the roles played by the principal actors and their ideas about activities that are needed to improve the situation.

We have built the framework after the interviews were over, by avoiding direct or leading questions on categories, and keeping a loose structure for the interviews. The categories and patterns we have used to present the report have emerged from an analysis of the transcribed interviews. We have avoided reference to secondary published material and to theoretical frameworks, except the methodological one suggested by grounded theory.

The report is structured as follows: the study first presents the methodology, including choice of sample, nature of interviews, coding of responses, and the method of determining categories and issues. The second chapter presents a narration of the thinking among the interviewees and interviewers about the nature of the conflict in Hyderabad – each section ends with a discussion on the findings from the interviews, embellished by the researchers own views. The final chapter is a brief one on the conclusions and recommendations that could be made.

### **Pursuing Peaceful Co-existence**

The critical task of the study is to analyze the respondents' ideas about the social and psychological processes required for establishing a normal relationship between the two communities in Hyderabad. Though there is some variation about the idea of what constituted 'normal', there is a strong and consistent view that it meant mixed localities without tensions; participation in each other's celebrations and social life; meaningful employment; functioning institutions; healthy issue-based politics, and so on. Basically, these views defined the situation that might have been expected if the problem of communalism was not there. Almost all the respondents gave vent to feelings of grief, anger, and frustration, which were sometimes intense, especially while narrating their personal experiences. The views of the interviewees about specific sub themes are presented below, followed by a discussion by the authors.

#### **(a) Reasons for Continued Tension**

Interviewees responded to the experience of communal violence with a feeling of unreality, and a sense that a normal and predictable life was not possible. All of them had their own diagnosis and their responses can be grouped into the following categories that can be set as the context. They are presented in the order of importance they have for the respondents:

- Religious and historical reasons.
- Unemployment and low education levels.

#### ***Historical and Religious basis for the Communal Divide***

All of the respondents stressed the historical and religious basis for the alienation between the communities. In this sense they perceive this as a problem they have inherited, and having a sense of 'inevitability.' They had their own versions of religion and history that varied depending on their education and ideological leanings.

Three sets of events seem to have widened the divide between the communities post- independence. One, events just preceding and after the accession of Hyderabad to the Union of India; two, events during the Telangana agitation in the late Sixties; and three, the introduction of the Ganesh procession during the late Seventies.

#### ***Discussion***

Though the relationship between the Hindus and Muslims in the State of Andhra Pradesh is characterized by the dominance of the Hindu community, the situation in the Old City is different. Here the question of dominance is unresolved and both the Hindu and Muslim political configurations constantly work to expand their spheres of influence and control. This quest for domination has resulted in the ghettoizing of the Old City. Over the years the demographic patterns of localities are changing, and today the Old City presents a mosaic of Hindu or Muslim dominated localities.

The relationship between the groups has a chequered past. There have been periods of communal amity, and also periods of strife. In the last few decades however the divide has been increasing, and this is reflected in a pattern of systematic discrimination against the Muslim community. This pertains to jobs, access to political and bureaucratic power, education, and most other spheres of life. \*\*\*\*\*(The distance between the Hindus and the Muslims of the Old City is further extended by the 1 economic inequality between the communities)\*\*\*\*\*. The lack of employment, business opportunities, and ability to access government contracts etc. has all contributed to strengthen the views held by the Muslims about their political exclusion.

Among the factors at work in the Old City are the interests of the real-estate agents belonging to both the communities. They have, at times, a vested interest in fostering communal violence, as it allows them to strike very profitable deals due to distress sales by families moving to safer neighborhoods.

All this must be seen in the background of the increasingly extremist rhetoric from religious leaders in both the communities in India today. Their views are gaining acceptance among the elites of both communities, and in this process ‘myths’ about the other are being created and perpetuated.

### ***Economy and Unemployment***

The second most often mentioned reason has to do with the economic deterioration of the Old City, and the related issues of unemployment, frustration, and militancy amongst the youth.

### ***Discussion***

The local economy of the Old City is declining. New businesses are not being set up. The industrial estates, established decades ago, have all gone sick and shut shop. Government offices are shifted to the new City. All these events have had a negative multiplier effect on the economic situation in the Old City, and it is today in a downward spiral.

The economy here is largely informal with men mostly engaged as rickshaw pullers, auto drivers, petty hawkers, shop assistants, hotel employees. A large number of people commute into the new city everyday for employment. Remittances from workers in the Gulf contribute significantly to the economy of the Old City. These workers are predominantly Muslim. The Hindus in the Old City have no equivalent avenue of income. Liberalisation and integration with the global economy has brought many private sector jobs to Hyderabad, but very few of them have gone to young people from the Old City.

Problems are particularly acute for young people from both the communities. Many educated young people are frustrated by the lack of opportunities for advancement, and their continued dependence on their families for survival.

## **(b) Causal Elements of Conflict: Roles played by the Principal Actors**

### ***Political Parties***

One of the downsides of Indian democracy characterised by our electoral ‘First Past the Post’ system can be seen in Hyderabad, in the way electoral politics have developed over the years.

Most immigrants into Hyderabad from rural areas are Hindus. The Muslims on the other hand are a besieged community. Politically marginalized, their proportion in the population is also continually declining. The only way they can hold on to their political representation is by increasing the concentration of their population in a few chosen constituencies.

Almost all the interviewees said that there has been a role of political parties in incidents of communal violence since 1978. The interests of the local parties ie. the BJP and MIM in keeping communal tensions alive is related in a straightforward way to vote-bank politics. Voters who are communally polarized will vote for communal parties thus keeping parties with other platforms out of the picture. But sometimes the larger political agendas combine with the local situation with catastrophic consequences. This has happened in all the major riots since the 1970’s namely: the Rameeza Bee incident in 1978; the Ganesh procession in 1984, the riots of 1990, and of 1996.

### **Discussion of the issues in each of the cases**

In all these cases it was the dominant parties at the state level that fueled the conflict - either wanting a change of leadership, or with the intention of destabilizing the ruling party. The local parties proved quite willing to go along with this agenda, as it was serving their purpose of keeping tensions alive and further ghettoizing the Old City.

### ***(c) Religious and Caste Organisations***

Many religious and caste-based organizations also reinforce the differences between the communities. Often they indulge in promoting negative stereotypes and ‘myths’ about the other in order to strengthen their support, instead of focusing on their own merits. The VHP, the Bajrang Dal, and RSS among the Hindus, and the DJS, and Jamaat-e-Islaami amongst the Muslims, are organizations with a particularly powerful impact on their followers. Their work leads to the creation of a corps of youth with a strong sense of ‘justified militancy’. The sentiments they spread are often used for inciting and mobilizing violence in the Old City.

### **Inferences**

Many of the ingredients that contribute to violence within society are present in the Old City today. Contextually there is a longstanding divide between communities based on historical and religious grounds; a stagnant and depressed local economy that is in close proximity with a bustling one; and a population with a large youth cohort that is frustrated. Institutionally there is an electoral system that rewards parties polarizing voters along communal lines, thus creating an incentive for permanent communal tension. The political, religious, and economic elites also have the necessary organizational and financial resources to pursue their own agendas, irrespective of the cost to peace, or societal welfare.

This ‘heady’ mixture makes for an easy alignment between the grievances of the dispossessed and disenfranchised, and the greed of the vested interests. Given this situation, it is surprising indeed that not many more of the people, especially the youth, have been radicalized in religious, political, or ideological ways.

### **Institutional Capacity to Respond to Violence**

Findings in this study corroborate existing research that suggests violence and rioting are likely to occur in specific situations where there is:

- Long-term hostility between groups
- Precipitating event/s that provoke either anger or fear in the attacking group.
- A sense of justification for attacking the other group and a consensus within the community of the rightness of the action.
- An assessment that violence will not be too risky.

Following the above it is clear that institutional capacity should be judged by the ability to take the following short-term steps that are required for control of outbreaks of violence.

- Provocative incidents, particularly attacks on sacred symbols, should be prevented or immediately punished.
- The social construction of shared outrage and intention for violence must be blocked, whether in the mass media or on the street.
- The sense of impunity that accompanies this construction must be blocked, not least by making clear that police force will be used to apprehend and punish rioters.
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A system of co-ordination between the police and the Maitri committees has been set up in Hyderabad to address just the above situations, but we find that they have not performed well on all three counts. Though the situation was known both to the police and to elders in the community, there had been no concerted effort to address the situation locally, or to bring it urgently to the notice of higher police authorities and civic leadership.



This is reflected in the fact that many of the respondents felt that there was a sense of complacency in the police, and that the composition of the Maitri committees had been compromised.

**Policing the Old City is also a major occupation of the Police Force in Hyderabad – in fact senior officials feel that the focus on monitoring the communal situation prevents the police from performing their more regular duties properly.**

**The police are badly engaged in old city and the police get involved in small incidents that occur. The priorities get shifted. In the heights communal situations police resources get committed to preventing the outbreak of conflicts and violence and are not able to take care of burglaries etc. The police should not be required to ensure that festivals pass off peacefully.**

In a communal situation a rapid response from the police is very important. If the police respond promptly then the situation becomes localized and does not spread to the other areas.

The communal situation in old city breaks in two ways one is accidental and the other is by plan or design. The situation that breaks out in old city by plan or design is when there is a role played by ISI, fundamentalist organization, leaders etc. This is slightly difficult to handle because there is organized force acting behind it.

### **Best Practices**

What then is the learning from all the interviewees, the work of various organizations, as also the experiences of the writers? Is it possible to make recommendations about particular kinds of interventions, or suggest best practices? The examples presented below are illustrative and are not exhaustive, nor do they cover all possible areas of intervention:

In the backdrop of the riots that took place in 1978, a few progressive individuals took the initiative of building a platform with communal harmony as its basis. The result was the formation of **Hyderabad Ekta**. Ekta also took up the campaign that the Government and the police machinery could easily control riots provided there was a political will. The methods adopted by Ekta to take the message of communal harmony included issuing leaflets, pasting posters, and holding meetings in the sensitive areas. However, Ekta became active only when there was a communal conflict and that according to one of its founders was the ‘tragedy’ of the Ekta.

In the aftermath of the violence in 1990, the **Henri Martin Institute** started working to promote reconciliation between the communities. It moved away from its traditional role of Christian evangelical work among the Muslims, and started constructive programmes and inter-faith activities. They concentrated on the Sultan Shahi area in the Old City, and to an extent their work was successful. They started a Tailoring and Embroidery Training and Production unit, involving women from both communities.

**Play for Peace** is another organisation working towards building communal amity. They recruit youth with a history of involvement in communally divisive activities and engage them to teach school children games. These games are played by mixed groups of children and have an underlying theme of co-operation and harmony. Their activities are gaining popularity.

**COVA** (Confederation of Voluntary Organisations) has a comprehensive programme in the Old City. The key principle underlying their approach is that a healthy and harmonious relationship is possible if each of

the communities are strong, secure and confident in themselves. As the Muslim community is relatively weak and getting weaker, relating to and integration with the rest of society is becoming more difficult. Hence as a first step to secure communal harmony the Muslim community has to participate in the processes of holistic development. COVA has initiated many activities: Mahila Sanatkar for economic activity for women; Roshanvikas for thrift and credit, Youthtrac for counselling, training and placement services for the youth; PUCAAR a grass-root citizen's initiative in the Old City with a charter of demands made to political parties contesting legislative and municipal elections; COVA also works extensively with small neighbourhood organisations and residents' associations in the Old City.

### **Suggested Civil Society Interventions for Prevention of Communal Violence**

From the Study carried out, the garnering of individual experiences, and the examination of Best Practices, we can summarize once again the factors to be considered for prevention of communal violence:

Prevention of provocative Incidents;  
Prevention of a sense of shared outrage in a community following an incident; and  
Prevention of a sense of impunity among potential rioters by government showing that it would not be tolerated.

We have seen that communal violence occurs first when people bear a sense of animosity to the 'other' community, because of a history of distrust, misrepresentations, and actual incidents of violence, and perceived injustice. This cause cannot be mitigated in the short run by facile appeals to peace, or the exhortations of well-off people for communal harmony. Any real effort towards communal harmony should be carried out with the full consciousness that animosity and distrust does exist between communities, and that from this base violent incidents could erupt, as a reaction, either to a deliberate motivated attempt to disrupt inter-community relations, or even as the result of a false rumour, taken as credible in a communally charged atmosphere.

However, what can be done over a longer period is to build bridges between neighbouring communities, politically, economically, and socio-culturally. This can be done, for example by organizing people from both communities to come together to voice joint political demands, with government, with municipalities, or even with contesting political parties. Economic production units, employing persons of both communities also produce mutual bonds of trust and inter-dependence. Joint celebration of festivals, under the leadership of the respected elders of both communities; and creating space, such as sports clubs, where the youth from both communities can form friendships could also be recommended. Growing intimate knowledge of each other as families and individuals; inter-dependence in the work place; joint action for mutually beneficial development of localities; and friendship during relaxation, all make historical animosities fade over time. But any new incident, however small, can create serious setbacks.

Therefore, long-standing securely funded and well-led Inter-Community Interventions need to be put in place in all the areas mentioned above. Communication of growing tolerance, friendship-building, and new ways of thinking, should also be a regular feature, within the communities, and also directed towards opinion-leaders, decision-makers, political and social leaders, and the general media.

Again, for benefits in the long term, firm economic, income generating, and social development activities, units, structures, and processes should be put in place. This can only be done effectively if both government and the private business sector are made aware of the importance of such economic community-building work, and their involvement assured. Hence, an important part of civil society intervention for prevention of communal violence lies in Advocacy Work with Government, Business, Development Agencies and Media.

From such a positive base, local neighbourhood committees, Mothers and Parents Groups, Association of Civic Leaders, and Teachers, can all look out for and scotch any 'provocative incidents' from happening. Educational institutions, Clubs, and entertainment media should also be made to plan dissemination of better knowledge about each other, cultures, religions, and histories.

However, despite all this, one cannot assume that incidents will not occur. Genuine Peace Committees headed by respected and acknowledged community leaders should be ever ready to investigate any incident, and dispel the growth of a 'Shared Sense of Outrage' following an incident. Careful preparation for such fire-fighting work needs to be planned.

Under some conditions, even such civil society intervention may not suffice, especially if motivated political forces are behind the incident. Excellent rapport needs to be built up between civil society leaders committed to 'vibrant' peace, and governmental heads, such as the local DCP, and maybe even with the Chief Secretary and the DGP. The Police or other officials must be ready to swing into action if the occasion demands it to issue a clear unmistakable warning to potential rioters. GO-NGO bridge-building, still in its infancy, is a necessary instrument for maintaining peace between communities, though it must be emphasized that peace must be built from the bottom upwards, and all superficial 'law and order' approaches set aside.

For implementing each of these steps, specialized training will have to be designed based on actual experiences and involving people from the communities themselves.