



Hyderabad In Transition: (1948-1956)– A Case Study Of Social Reconfiguration Of The Asaf Jah Nobility

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ABSTRACT

The 19th century State of Hyderabad was a melting pot of cultures and people of different hues. The state had adopted a policy of absorbing talent from across the vast realms of the country in its bid to strengthen and enrich its administration and promote growth of the state. This influx of people led to the shaping of a composite culture. This culture was an inclusive culture of many layers and proportions. Academicians, military personnel, administrators, physicians, legal professionals etc. from different parts of the country made Hyderabad their home. Scholars' familiar with this position of the state, attribute this influx to the creation of a later period phenomenon known as the Mulki agitation. The intervening years of 1948-1956 in the history of Hyderabad, was witness to major structural changes in the socio-cultural and economic hierarchy of the state. Aspects which defined Hyderabad's identity in terms of its composite culture, aristocracy and feudal character were put to test during this period. This paper attempts to revisit and understand the nature of reconfiguration of this social structure especially among the nobility, and through case studies of three very prominent aristocratic families of deccan namely, (1) Mohi ud doulas- religious scholar and physician – family which traces its lineage to Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddiqui (RA), (2) Mohd. Fazaullah Siddiqui- Chief Justice of Hyderabad High court and (3) Ghulam Ghouse Khan- governor-Aurangabad (then part of Nizams territory) beknown their identity, contribution and subsequent loss of the same during the transitioning years in the state of Hyderabad.

Keywords: Hyderabad, Transition, Social reconfiguration, Legacy, Mohi ud doulas, Mohd. Fazlullah Siddiqui, Ghulam Ghouse Khan.

Introduction

Accession of princely states in the run up to independence and the subsequent re-organization of states, post-independence in 1947 CE posed several challenges to the new government of independent India. Numerous distinctiveness of the princely states came to the forefront during this period, the case in point here, being that of the state of Hyderabad. The Hyderabad state (present day Telangana) since the fall of the Kakatiya dynasty in 1323 CE has had a separate political history and socio-cultural experience spanning several centuries from the times of Bahamani sultanate, Qutub Shahis and Asaf Jahi's. Having been ruled post 1323 CE by dynasties which had no connection to the organic roots of the region and its people, Hyderabad evolved into a state with a complex culture which was both inclusive and discriminatory at various levels. This created a distinctive identity of the region on the basis of caste, language, culture, ethnicity and religion among other factors.

This complexity was most evident during the regime of the Asaf Jahi's. During this period to improve administrative efficiency, suitably talented people were recruited from all parts of the country, especially from north India. To modernize the states administration, officials trained in British Indian administrative apparatus were preferred and thus imported into the state. With passing years, the number of these recruits grew. These non mulkis or ghair mulkis as they were locally categorized and known became instrumental in developing a syncretic culture – Dakhni- which cut across caste, ethnicity and religion. As their numbers

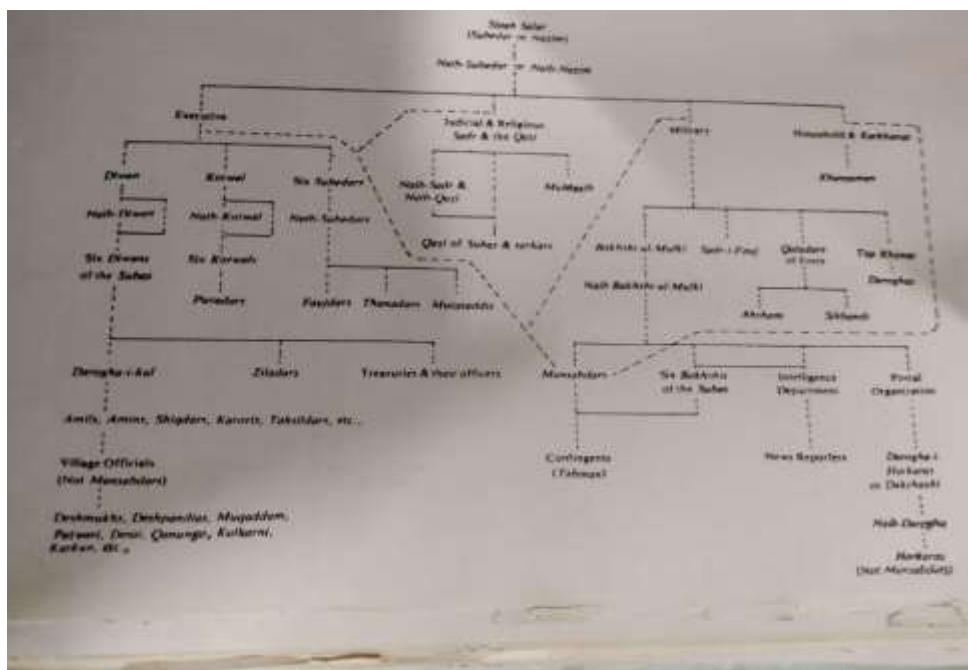
grew, they seized power, prestige and position and established their dominance in all spheres of the nizams administration. Their presence was most seen in departments of education, religious affairs, judiciary, health, and top echelons of bureaucracy. Another aspect that aided the growth of this composite culture was institutionalizing the administrative and social spheres of this ghair Mulki group.

Having laid the framework of a modern bureaucracy, Hyderabad saw the influx of highly skilled personnel like-Syed Hussain Bilgrami, Moulvi Chirag Ali, Aghornath Chattopadhyay, Syed Mehdi Ali, Abdul Khader later given the title of (Mohi ud Dowla) , Ghulam Ghouse Khan, Mirza Asha Beig (grandson of Mirza Ghalib) etc. to name a few. From being personal tutors, founder principals, eminent religious scholars, reformers, mystics, able administrators and nationalist they came to represent the mixed culture, courtesy, and humanity that exalted Hyderabad to world fame. Yet, on one hand if this composite Deccan culture represented harmony and interaction in a heterogeneous society, at the same time it, mis-represented the socio-economic life of majority of Hyderabad state people who suffered autocratic feudal exploitation. The social structure of majority community in Hyderabad was determined by the caste hierarchy. In the state, the peculiar nature of caste system helped in fortifying the ills of feudalism in the state. Unlike its counterpart in Gangetic valley region, the social structure emanating out of the caste system in Hyderabad was inter-twined and closely linked to the structure of landholding, socio-economic privilege and power. Here, the aristocratic class enjoyed social and economic privileges in the state and dominated the village life and society. This close connection between caste system and economic activity in the villages, led to rampant exploitation and prevalence of many evil practices in this period.

Social- Political Structure in Nizam’s Hyderabad

The Asaf Jah nobility formed the backbone of the Nizams administration at Hyderabad and comprised of the Paigahs at the very apex of the hierarchy followed by Salar Jung family, Rajas/Maharajas, Jagirdars, Samsthana chiefs etc. The mansabdari system a key feature of Mughal administration was prevalent in the Hyderabad government and all the high-ranking officials of different departments belonged to this category. A point to be noted here, is that though the Nizam adopted the Mughal feudal structure of administration in early days, but eventually graduated to incorporating indigenous features later on, leading to autonomy and independence in managing the affairs of the state. This led to a new era in the history of state which can be credited to the seventh Nizam Mir Osman Ali Khan. By the 20th century, the State had many distinctive features to its credit, first to separate executive from judiciary, first to develop public sector industries, railways, airways, post, telegraph, electrification and currency. Thus, the Nizams administration continued to demonstrate - the distinctive synthesis of Deccani culture and a multi layered conflict of interest of Mulki and ghair Mulki, Hindu and Muslim due to preponderance of Muslim character of the bureaucracy despite of Hindu being the majority community, similarly of language Urdu over Telegu and the ills of the entrenched caste system inter-twined with economy.

The below diagram is representative of the structure of Nizam’s government and demonstrates the positions occupied by rank officials- known as mansabdars, a title received and continued from Mughal court.



Source- Telangana Archives
Fig- 1.1- Structure of Nizams administration

Likewise, the asymmetry and thus the conflict between Mulki and Ghair Mulki in terms of representation and benefits drawn can be ascertained from the below table.

Table 1: BIRTHPLACE OF OFFICERS OF THE HYDERABAD GOVERNMENT IN 1886

Birthplace of Officers	Number	%	Total monthly salary drawn by them
Natives	246	57	75,867
Hindustan	97	20	44,173
Madras	66	14	20,602
Bombay	36	8	24,194
Other Countries	7	1	1,310
Details not mentioned	24	-	12,570
Total Number	476	-	178,716

Source: Internal Migration policies in an Indian state: A Study of the Mulki rules in Hyderabad and Andhra, K. V. Narayana Rao, MIT Massachusetts, Cambridge, 1977.

It may be noted that the total monthly income drawn by officers from Bombay and Hindustan (i.e., North India) is large in relation to their numbers, suggesting that they generally held very senior positions.¹ Furthermore, one can measure from another table below the overtly Muslim character of the bureaucracy and coupled with adoption of Urdu as the language of the state, in place of Telugu the language spoken by the majority becoming a major flashpoint between the two communities vis-à-vis employment opportunities and representation in government.

Table 2 LITERATES BY RELIGION IN HYDERABAD STATE IN 1911 and 1931

Religion	1911	1931
HINDUS		
Total Population	11,626,146	9,699,615
Literates	266,968	391,317
Literates in English	8,838	38,872
Literates in Urdu	NA	78,418
MUSLIMS		
Total Population	1,380,990	1,534,666
Literates	81,260	158,859
Literates in English	7,020	19,275
Literates in Urdu	NA	104,980

Sources: 1) Census of India, 1911, Vol. 19, Hyderabad Table 8 pp.- 64- 65-.

2) Census of India, 1931, Vol. 23, Hyderabad Part II, Table 13, pp. 188-189.

Those literate include 13,559 Hindu and 17,577 Muslim women.²

Interestingly, the decennial data that came after the 1931 Census of the state noted the demand for imparting education in the language spoken by the majority people. For there were accusations that the vast majority, here the Hindus, were not inclined to receive education which had an inherent bias towards the ideology of the political dispensation of the time. There was a constant demand for recognition of instruction to be given in native/ mother tongues, and for the abolition of Islam-oriented curriculum. Sadly, the administration not only ignored these demands but also, came down heavily on such demands for institutions. A school with a very small percentage of students could operate without permission of the Nizam's government, if giving instructions in native language. In all other cases permission was denied and schools violating the provisions were closed down by the police. The 1951 census revealed a different pattern of migration, but such stood the matters in 1948 on the eve of accession.³

Hyderabad in Transition

During the intervening years of India's independence and accession of states, Hyderabad had a population of 17 million with an area of 82,000 square miles. The people of the state were keen on joining the Indian Union. They desired for independence without "quotation marks". There was also the demand for the

¹ K. V. Narayana Rao, Internal Migration policies in an Indian state: A Study of the Mulki rules in Hyderabad and Andhra, MIT Massachusetts, Cambridge, 1977.

² K. V. Narayana Rao, Internal Migration policies in an Indian state: A Study of the Mulki rules in Hyderabad and Andhra, MIT Massachusetts, Cambridge, pp- 17-18, 1977. <https://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/81926>

³ K. V. Narayana Rao, Internal Migration policies in an Indian state: A Study of the Mulki rules in Hyderabad and Andhra, MIT Massachusetts, Cambridge, pp 17-18, 1977. <https://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/81926>

natural progression of the state towards democratic and progressive ideals of governance and administration. The police action of September 1948 termed 'Operation Polo' realized that wish of the people and set in motion a complete transformation of the political, administrative, social and economic order of the day. The accession of Hyderabad ushered in a complete overhaul of political – administrative apparatus, which in turn reflected in changes in the social economic structures and institutions in place in the Hyderabad state. The reconfiguration was manifestation of many ills and contradictions that existed in the administration and society. As noted by author of 'Hyderabad 1948- An avoidable Invasion' the slogans raised by his fellow Hindu mates in his locality, post police action shouting 'Mana Rajyam' – (meaning our rule) summed up the extreme at odds sentiments prevailing at the time. The changes introduced were swift.

The feudal exploitation which tyrannized the economic life of the rural people and held sway over the societal structure in the villages, witnessed major changes due to the land reforms and redistribution of assets that catapulted to the forefront new political and social forces in the form of communist, peasant, Dalit and tribal groups in the state. Similarly, the autocratic feudal administrative structure represented by the Nizam and Asaf Jah nobility was replaced by a military- civil administration appointed by the Union government of India. The civil military administration under Gen. J.N Choudhary was mandated to restore law and order in the state post accession and make functional arrangement to immediately address the pressing issues facing the state. This involved, as chosen at the outset, correcting a glaring a symmetry in terms of representation of the majority culture, language and presence in administrative workforce. It did not exactly achieve the desired result but it led to complete decimation of the incumbent nobility.

The following case study of three such prominent noble families, highlights shortsightedness and misplaced priority of not utilizing the trained hand and insight for purposes of administration during the critical period of transition. Ironically, the Hyderabad state had to once again, rely on the Ghair Mulki to set its house in order.

Mohiud Daula's

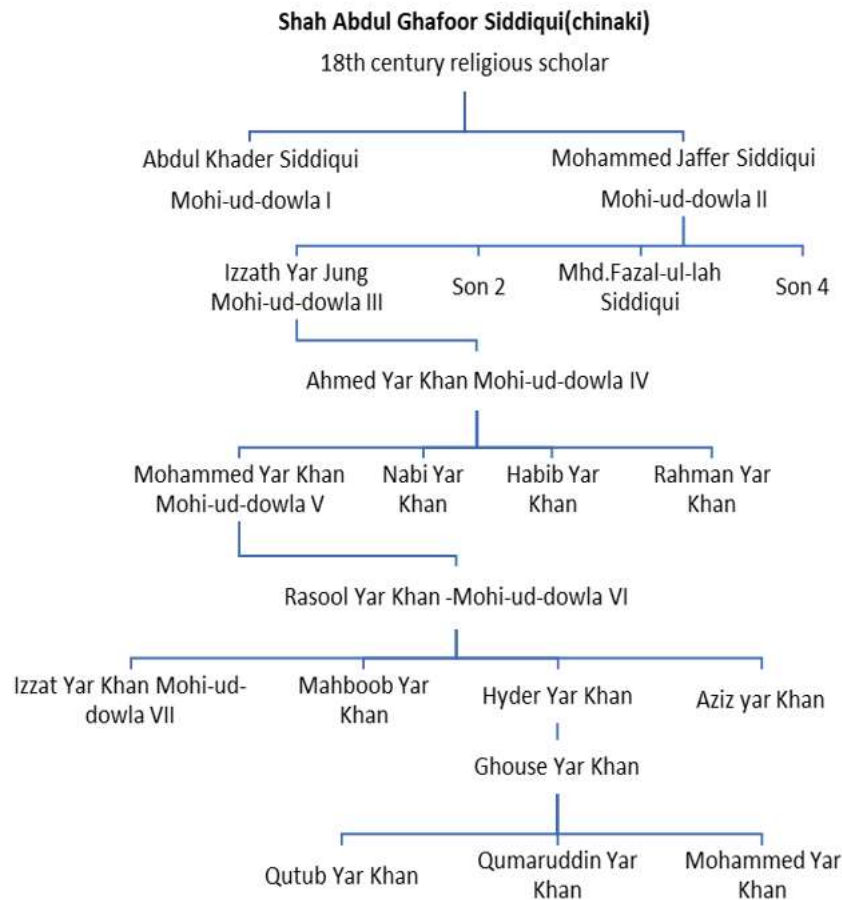
The story of Hyderabad is as much it is of dynasties that ruled over it, as it is of various people and communities that provided best talent to the city. The families of Mohi ud Doula, Mhd. Fazal Ullah Siddiqui and Ghulam Ghouse Khan were one such notable contributors to the efficacy of the erstwhile Nizam's regime. Related by lineage and matrimonial alliances, the patriarchs of these families have held important positions in various departments of the state prior to 1948. The Mohi ud Daula family traces its lineage to Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddiqui (R.A). The family, originally of Arab descent, migrated from Ahmedabad, Gujrat to Hyderabad in 18th century. Known for being religious scholar of repute the offsprings of Shah Abdul Gafoor Siddiqui (chinaki) namely- Abdul Khader Siddiqui and Mohammed Jaffer Siddiqui mastered medicine and religion. Fascinated by their bearings the first Nizam Asaf Jah I- expressed desire to have one of the children come to Hyderabad. Once in Hyderabad, the family through diligence and service was successful in earning the title of '**Sadras-e-Sudoor Hakeem ul Hukma Yar Khan Bahadur Mohi ud Daula**' and retained it for 7 generations in hierarchy. The first to be addressed as such was Hazrat Shah Abdul Khader Saheb Chenaki.

The family held important positions as head of Religious Department, royal physicians and surgeons and members of Justice department. To give a context to the close relations between the Mohi ud Daula's and the subsequent Nizams during the reign of the fifth Nizam Nawab Afzal ud Daula- Mohammed Yar Khan Mohiud Daula V assumed the responsibility of Director of Department of Religious Affairs and designate Hakim ul Hukma and was the principal go between the Nizam and the then prime minister Salar Jung I. His period saw Hyderabad emerge, as the favoured destination of Islamic Scholars from all over the world. He was specifically instrumental in popularizing 'Mouloodkhani' (A system of singing praise to the prophet) in Hyderabad. The other significant contribution of the family was to the development and practice of Unani medicine, an alternative medicine system to western allopathy.⁴

The below flow chart traces the genealogical roots of the Mohi ud Daula family

⁴ Mohaimen Khan, 'Genealogical roots of Nawab Mohiud Daula', Project dissertation, unpublished, 2020.

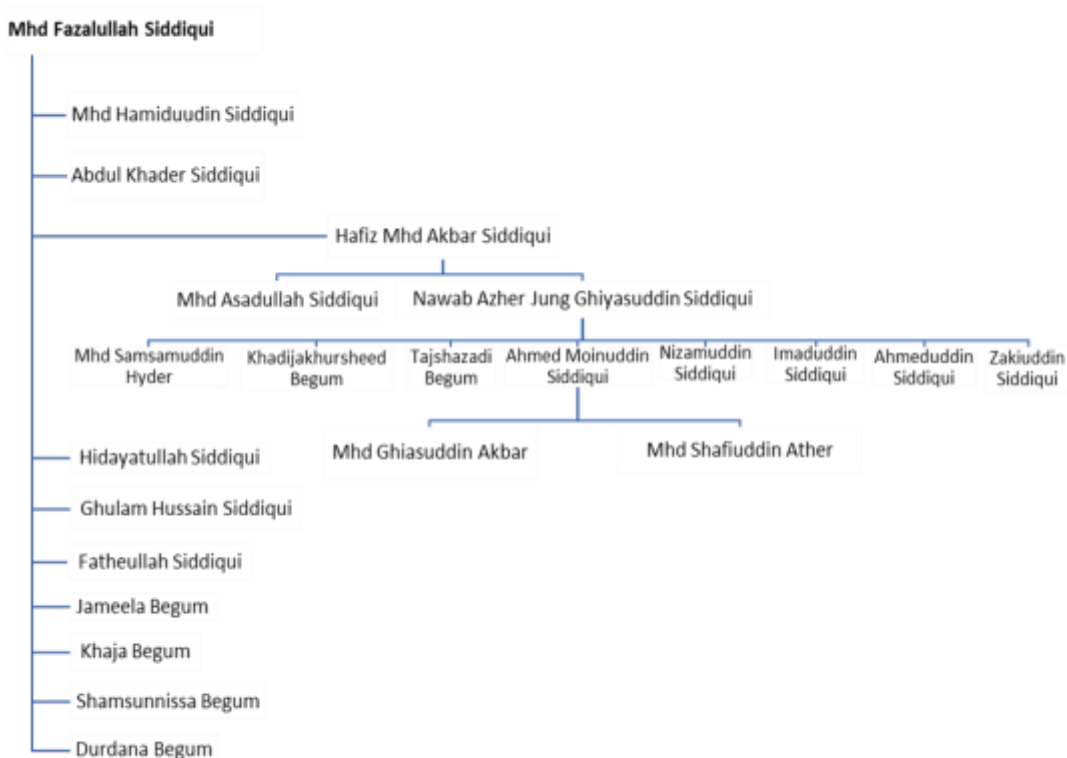
Genealogy of Mohiud Doula: 1st-7th century



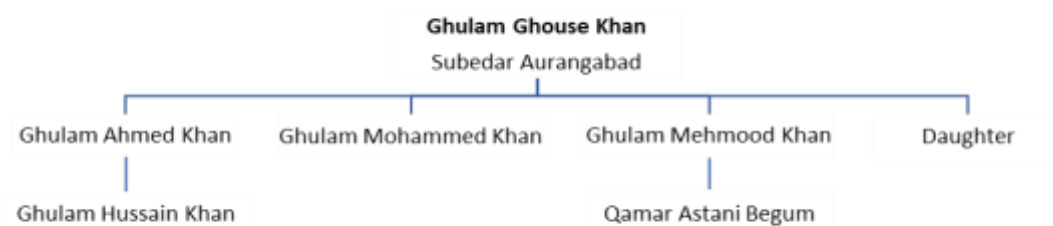
The subsequent families of governor Ghulam Ghouse Khan of Aurangabad and Fazal Ullah Siddiqui Chief Justice of Hyderabad High Court, Deccan are the other two prominent families of the deccan. Related by matrimonial alliance, these two families contributed significantly to the internal decision making in the Nizam's court as by the time of the fifth Nizam Afzal ud Daula, court intrigues had come to play important role, albeit sadly in the affairs of the state. Ghulam Ghouse khan served as governor of Aurangabad and his son Ghulam Mehmood khan was the talukdar (District Collector) of the same region. Ghulam Ghouse khan served as Aurangabad governor during the reign of the fifth Nizam and his son Ghulam Mehmood khan as collector during the reign of Mir Mahboob Ali khan, the sixth Nizam. Similarly, Justice Fazalullah served the Nizams dominions during the reign of the fifth Nizam Afzal ud Daula. Significant contributions have been made by these nobilities to the built heritage of the region especially in Hyderabad. However, most of these heritage structures in the form of deoris and palaces have been lost to time.

The prominent ones, only on record but no longer on ground were the residence of Justice Fazalullah near Kali Kaman, Irani gully (lane). The lane was named after Mir Alam ancestor of Salarjung, an Iranian gentleman. His grandson Nawab Azher Jung Bahadur too had contributed to the landscape in terms of mansions-Bridge view, Chaderghat, behind British residency and Nishisth e Azher Jung (official quarters) near Nazri Bagh. Interestingly, though dargahs and masjids constructed by them still remain. Besides, the cultural legacy, their contribution to efficacy in governance is what made them stand out. Especially in the case of Nawab Azher Jung Bahadur the grandson of Fazal Ullah Siddiqui, who is of the lineage of Mohiud-Duala's, was the member of the Nizams personal staff and held the position of Superintendent of Royal Palace. He was a close confidant of Nizam Osman Ali Khan the seventh and last Nizam of Hyderabad and played a very critical role up to the end of second world war during the reign of the last Nizam. The period of accession was one of immense turbulence and Nizam Mir Osman Ali Khan frequently sought the counsel of Nawab Azher Jung Bahadur. The appointment of Sir Akbar Hydari as the prime minister of Hyderabad state during the turbulent period of 1937-1941 was one such counsel offered by Nawab Azher Jung. The strained relations with the apex group of Asaf Jah nobility- The Paigahs – Sir Vicar ul Umra- on many occasions scuttled constructive discussions with the Union government of India during standstill agreement and accession. These matters were more often than not, handled by Nawab Azher Jung.

**Genealogy of Mohammed Fazal Ullah Siddiqui
Chief Justice High Court, Hyderabad Deccan**



Genealogy of Ghulam Ghouse Khan- Governor of Aurangabad



Conclusion

It is evident therefore, that nobilities such as the above as they enjoyed close proximity with the Nizam were in an ideal position to aid in smooth transfer of power, but were sidestepped. In the hindsight, the contribution and role played by these families – though feudal in character-had evolved -as evidence shows - to don more democratic roles if given an opportunity. Their legacies in terms of built heritage are largely lost, but what could have been capitalized in terms of having insight in governance, is what probably weighs in more. This is so because, the politics of the region has changed forever, in trying to set right an asymmetrical administrative apparatus, what was lost was an opportunity to organically integrate. The essence of the syncretic Dakhni culture, however symbolic was the biggest casualty of this social reconfiguration. Whatever remains today is a distant shadow of the former.

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