

Reimagining Hyderabad: Muslim and Dalit Politics in Pre Independence period

After the statement by Chidambaram in 2009 about the possibility of a separate Telengana State, the stakes, hopes and excitement rose immensely, while also provoking the question of - what kind of Telengana state should be desired. With this powerful question the exercise for the articulation of the future of Telengana began. The most prominent to address this question were the various dalit groups, that felt that the question of future is invariably linked to the past and as a result political events of 1972, 1969, 1956, and 1953 were analyzed. But they did not stop there. The events of 1948 also came into the purview, and by default, the pre-1948 Dalit Activism in the erstwhile Hyderabad state.

Muslim groups also found themselves in a similar situation. The apprehensions about the spread of rightist forces during the Telangana movement created enough nervousness among them and a foreboding that their future in a separate Telengana state would be fraught with difficulties. They felt that if they remained silent, it would be dangerous not only to Muslims but to the future of Telengana state and its democracy. Their investigations into their present and past also took them to their lives in the pre 1948 period.

During the process of constructing their past, both Dalit and Muslims groups feel that they don't have satisfactory narratives about their past and the available ones did not represent them well. Both increasingly feel that the question of history of Hyderabad is important and that it should be revisited from new perspectives.

On the other hand Anveshi became interested in this question of Hyderabad and its past through other ways. Since 2007, M.A.Moid, had been trying to understand why Muslims of old city voted for the communist parties in the first general election of 1952. This was done in the context of CPM's reentry in to the old city politics during 2004-09 years, and the positive response by the public. The study led to two very important findings: that there are significant reasons for the constant presence of AIMIM in Hyderabad since 1957 and that 'Police Action' was most important and defining moment for most Muslims of Hyderabad. These two findings raised further questions for us: whether Muslims of Hyderabad should be looked at as 'religious' and 'backward' or politically pragmatic and attuned to electoral democracy; why particular memories of Police Action were erased and particular remained among the Hindus and Muslims; and how the histories of Hyderabad were written, why and what has been missing in it. We began to understand that the history of Hyderabad state, especially of the early 20th century till 1948, has been written from three distinct strands of 'nationalism' – Arya Samaj mode that sees Hyderabad as a 'Muslim autocratic' state; Congress-integrationist where the absorption of the Hyderabad is seen as inevitable; and on left-liberal lines highlighting Telangana armed struggle, as a triumph of 'people' over the feudal aristocracy and its autocratic king, Mir Osman Ali Khan. Anveshi Fellow, Gogu

Shyamala's work on the biography of Sada Lakshmi- the first women and Dalit minister in newly formed Andhra Pradesh also led to the question of the nature of Dalit movement in pre 1948 Hyderabad.

These two sets of forays into investigations of the pre-1948 Hyderabad state led us to enter the debate on the 'Nizam' through our first issue of the Broadsheet on 'Nizam's Rule and Muslims: Truth and Fairy tales about Hyderabad Liberation' in 2010. Several initiatives such as Singidi, Muslimvaada writers, Hyderabad Book Trust's publication of Mohammed Hyder's October Coup, Deccan Archeological and Cultural Research Institute are urging us towards rethinking the pre-independence history of the Hyderabad state. The critical lens towards the given narratives, communist, congress and arya samaj in the wake of the 2009 Telangana movement stresses the point that the history of Hyderabad re-thought from Muslim and Dalit perspectives.