

NEW HOMES IN THE WORLD: INDIA'S HYDERABADIS ABROAD

KAREN LEONARD

Overview

HYDERABADIS, people from the city of Hyderabad or the former state of Hyderabad, have been migrating abroad in some numbers since the late 1940s and especially since the late 1960s. They have gone to work or live in rather diverse places, most notably Pakistan, the UK, Australia, the US, Canada, and the Gulf states of the Middle East. Most among them have tried to maintain some degree of Hyderabadi identity. They retain connections to their homeland, build networks across national boundaries, and try to teach their children about Hyderabadi culture. They and their children have also become participants to varying degrees in the national life of the nation-states to which they have migrated. The specific environments in the destination countries, particularly the legal and political conditions governing migration, working conditions, and citizenship, provide both constraints and opportunities for the immigrants as they selectively shape new identities. For the time being, we must assume some initial identity or identities relating them to their homeland, locating them within it but being carried abroad and worked within the new locations. "Hyderabadi", or "a person from Hyderabad", was an identity that linked one closely to a state.

It calls up memories of that princely state in the middle of British India ruled by the Nizam of Hyderabad. This was citizenship not so much in the modern sense of participation in politics, in decision-making, but in the sense of having a claim on the state for one's livelihood. *Mulki*, or countryman, became a legal category with preference for state jobs in the late nineteenth century, and a process was established for non-*mulkis* (foreigners, outsiders, non-countrymen) to become *mulkis* in Hyderabad. Aside from the legal definition established then, it is a concept popularly employed to designate closeness and loyalty to the state.¹ Hyderabadis were not only

citizens of Hyderabad State in the sense described above, they shared in and helped to constitute "Hyderabadi culture", producing a sense of community particularly strong for members of the ruling élite. Hyderabadi culture was often termed "Mughlai" because its feudal overtones and elaborate courtesies derived from the Persian-based court culture of the Mughal Empire in Delhi. The first Nizam had, after all, come to the Deccan as provincial governor for the Mughals, and he only gradually established his independence from that imperial power.² Hyderabadi culture changed over time, responding to the colonial Indian culture developing under British rule all around it by bringing in some English-educated officials and establishing English-medium educational institutions in Hyderabad too.

Yet Hyderabad continued its separate tack by a shift from Persian to Urdu as the state language in the 1880s, thus renewing and expanding Hyderabadi culture. By the early twentieth century, the use of Urdu in the administrative and educational system linked villages and towns to Hyderabad city. The creation of the Urdu-medium Osmania University in 1917 drew young Hindu speakers of Marathi, Telugu, and Kannada from the districts to the city, increasing the numbers of educated Hyderabadis and encouraging them to push for greater roles in the state. A populist Mulki Movement developed in the 1920s, urging the Nizam to initiate representative political institutions and empower indigenous or local people. This movement might have broadened the base of the Nizam's rule and secured Hyderabad a more autonomous place in post-colonial India, but it failed in the face of rising Muslim nationalism in the state.³ Hyderabad's ruling class largely ignored both the Mulki Movement and the Indian nationalist movement until it was too late; the Indian Army ushered Hyderabad State into the Indian Union in 1948, through the "Police Action".⁴ After 1948, the Nizam became a figurehead and many middle class Hyderabadi Muslims migrated to the new state of Pakistan, created along with India in 1947. Another rupture came in 1956, when India's reorganisation of states along linguistic lines dismembered the old trilinguistic state. Hyderabad city and the Telangana districts were united with the

Telugu-speaking districts formerly under British rule and oriented towards Madras city, and Hyderabad became the capital of Andhra Pradesh.⁵ It is India's fifth largest city at the start of the 21st century.

I have argued elsewhere that Hyderabadi culture was not really a cultural synthesis - it was the ruling class culture of a plural society, associated with the ruler and the state apparatus.⁶ Although the Nizam and most leading state officials were Muslim, they ruled over a majority Hindu population, and the plural society of old Hyderabad included select Hindus, Parsis, Anglo-Indians, and others. Members of the top families went to school together, socialised in various ways, and thought of themselves and their state as quite distinct from British India. Yet identity is a contested domain, an unstable, interactive, constitutive process,⁷ and in the past, as now in the diverse diasporic settings, the Hyderabadi identity has fallen apart and been reconstituted.

Hyderabad had always been a receiver of migrants from both inside and outside South Asia, a destination for centuries for Persians from Iran and Turks, including Uzbeks, from Central Asia, Hindus from all over the subcontinent, and smaller increments of Arabs, Africans, Anglo Indians, Frenchmen, Sikhs, and Parsis. Its reputation, however, was that it was a destination, that those who came settled there and seldom ventured out. When a daughter was married off to Lucknow (in northern India), people wept at the railway station as though she were going far, far away.

Survey of Outmigration

Now the flow of migrants is reversed. The chart below shows the destinations, timing, and composition of the major migrations from Hyderabad since 1947. These new contexts differ from each other, offering different legal and political options, different racial, religious, and class configurations and possible alliances. They show the continuing importance of the nation-state as shaper of both individual and collective identities, as my longer work, a book, will establish in detail; my

multi-site ethnographic work proceeded over many years and involved many trips.⁸

CHART OF HYDERABADI EMIGRANTS

	Dates
Destination	1947-48 1950s 1960s 1970s 1980s 1990s
Pakistan:	Muslims
UK:	Students, then middle and upper class, all backgrounds
Australia:	Anglo Indians, students, professionals, all backgrounds
US:	Students, then middle class, all backgrounds
Canada:	Students, then middle class, all backgrounds
Gulf states:	Professionals, workers, all backgrounds

Migration to Pakistan was the first significant movement out of Hyderabad. Muslim young men who were political activists as well as many middle and upper class members of old Hyderabad's ruling class opted for Pakistan in 1947 or after the 1948 Police Action. Many of these Hyderabadis took money and skills with them and made substantial contributions to the new Muslim nation, deemphasising their identity as Hyderabadis (although they settled so densely in Karachi that others continued to identify them that way) and encouraging their children to become Pakistanis. However, others in Pakistan continue to call them *muhâjirs* (outsiders, refugees); given that, and the unstable situation in Pakistan, many Hyderabadis from Pakistan are sending their children or grandchildren out for education, marriage, and/or migration. Thus we meet the Pakistani Hyderabadis as "twice migrants" in other settings, where again their identity is complicated by that of the state they are leaving. Just as their connection to Hyderabad State and Hyderabadî culture proved a liability in their attempt to become Pakistanis, they must now negotiate their status as Pakistanis, migrants from what is widely perceived to be an

Islamic state, in settings where they are again a minority, albeit now usually a religious minority in majority Christian countries. Because of their earlier repudiation of Hyderabad and India, it is often hard for them to reestablish connections with Hyderabadis from India in the overseas settings.

Those Hyderabadis who went to Britain (a few were being educated there in the early decades of the twentieth century, and their numbers increased in the 1950s and 60s) feel they are taking a third way, not going to Pakistan and not staying in India but going to post-colonial Britain, which once termed Hyderabad its "faithful ally". These immigrants see themselves as retreating to a society which historically encompassed the Nizam's former kingdom but did not rule it directly. Yet they now form part of a very large population of immigrants from South Asia, East Africa, and the West Indies. Despite a profile featuring aristocratic lineages, high education, and a deep appreciation of English culture, Hyderabadis in the UK have a hard time establishing a unique and positively-valued identity, given the large numbers of working-class, residentially-clustered Pakistanis, Punjabis, and Gujaratis who have also migrated to Britain.⁹ The British public's general knowledge of India and even Hyderabad is vague. There is a Hyderabad Association based in London, but greater numbers are mobilised by Urdu associations and, perhaps, by Islamic associations.

Australia and Canada, both formerly part of the British Empire, encouraged immigration from South Asia beginning only in the 1960s. Both Canada and Australia are now building vigorous multicultural societies, with slightly different versions of pluralism, and both countries have many other Asian immigrants. However, Anglo Indians or Britishers holding British passports could migrate before 1960, and many did go, especially to Australia. There was some knowledge of Hyderabad in Perth from the early largely Anglo Indian Hyderabad immigrant population in Australia. Australia gradually dropped its "white Australia" policy and has recruited many students, professionals, and workers from Asia from the 1970s on. Since the late 1960s, Canada also has been very receptive to Asian immi-

grants. Yet, in Canada with its strongly collective basis of multiculturalism, all South Asians are lumped together and it is difficult to single out Hyderabadis, Sikhs, or other special categories. Also, it seems there are too few Hyderabad Hindu in Canada to hold up the old synthesis idea, and the Toronto Hyderabad Association soon died, the Muslims turning to Islamic forums instead. In Australia again, there are many other South Asians, and, while, in the UK, Hyderabadis turn to Urdu associations with the more powerful Punjabi and Pakistani immigrants, in Australia, they turn to Islamic associations which link them with the earlier Afghan and Lebanese immigrants. While there is general knowledge of Britain's Indian empire and possibly of Hyderabad State, Hyderabad Associations have been non-existent or weak in both Canada and Australia, giving way to other principles of organisation.

A few Hyderabadis studied in the US before the opening up of immigration in the mid-1960s, but most immigrated after that, qualifying as skilled professionals. As in the UK, these Hyderabadis are lost among many other immigrants, especially other Asians. Furthermore, there is little or no public knowledge about India, the Nizam of Hyderabad, or the former Hyderabad State. In the US, the racial and class orientation is quite different too, with many South Asians not only perceiving themselves as "white" but being perceived that way by others. Political alliances tend to be not with "blacks" but with Asian Americans, the so-called "model minorities," and, for Muslims, with other Muslims in America.

In the Middle East, Hyderabadis have been economic migrants, in large numbers since the 1970s. Permanent settlement and citizenship are not options, and these workers planned to return to their homelands. From all class and religious backgrounds, and from both India and Pakistan, most go for specified contract periods, using the better pay to support relatives and improve educational and housing prospects in their homelands. Other expatriate workers include Arabs, Sri Lankans, Southeast, and East Asians. The Gulf countries have increasingly become a transitional site, particularly for the pro-

fessional people, who find themselves moving to Western countries instead of going back to India or Pakistan.

Processes of Change

Even those remaining in Hyderabad after 1947 experienced very significant readjustments to a new political, economic, and social regime. The imposition of Indian rule meant such major relocations and readjustments for many Hyderabadis in their homeland that it was almost as though they had moved to a new place. The changes in the homeland in the decades after 1948 have a bearing on subsequent migrations and on the ways in which the migrants are reorienting themselves to their new state settings.

The first point to make is that the unit of investigation, "Hyderabadi", has itself changed over time, as people connect themselves to differently defined or bounded states or cultures. *Mulki*, or countryman, was always a contested term, since it carried legal privileges in the old Hyderabad State. Its meaning has changed over time, and the people who claim the Hyderabadi identity have also changed. The most dramatic ruptures came with the 1948 Police Action and the 1956 Linguistic States Reorganisation, political events that sent some long-time Hyderabadis abroad and brought newcomers from coastal Andhra into the city of Hyderabad.

Then there is the nation of origin, the state from which the migrants have come, a unit which has also obviously changed from the old Hyderabad State to the new state of Andhra Pradesh. Or is the real unit Hyderabad city, standing on its own? In fact, both the continued existence and the nature of this homeland, Hyderabad (city or state), are matters of controversy. In my research, I found most self-identified Hyderabadis to be first generation migrants over the age of fifty who claimed some connection with the old Hyderabad State or its urban Mughlai or Indo-Muslim culture. But many of these people thought that their Hyderabad no longer existed.

If the city or state one claims as homeland does not still exist, how can one be a transmigrant? One former Hyderabadi, now a citizen of Pakistan, told me fiercely, "Where you have been is not Hyderabad, there is no Hyderabad any more", and he is not the only one who thinks the old center has disappeared (or been disappeared, in the Latin American sense, by the Indians or the Andhras). Those who went to the UK, many of them descendants of the old Hyderabadi ruling class, also tend to think that the old culture is dead in its homeland. They see themselves as culture-bearers in exile: "Hyderabad is here, janaab", a London Hyderabadi said, placing his hand on his heart, and an Urdu poem recited to me there says: "Now the surviving remnants of the culture are few, we are the scattered history of the Deccan".¹⁰ But there are also migrants who think that the old Hyderabadi culture does persist in its city of origin and that it is still winning followers, creating new Hyderabadis, today.

Another matter of contention is the exact nature of the Hyderabad that emigrants claim as their homeland. To some, it was a plural society, perhaps even a cultural synthesis, but to others it was an Islamic nation.¹¹ The answers depend partly on one's age and one's rank in the old society, but also very much on one's location today, the place and position in which one has settled. Memories are selectively shaped to serve present purposes, and migrants find it helpful to remember the homeland in certain ways and to forget it in others. Another point about the remembering and forgetting of one's homeland is that Hyderabadi emigrants have by and large moved without supporting casts, without servants or members of the older generation, people who were crucial to the transmission and interpretation of Hyderabadi culture in the past.

The kinds of national projects being undertaken by the states in which Hyderabadis are settling differ markedly. There is Pakistan's Punjabi-dominated and increasingly Islamic society, and there are British, Canadian, Australian, and United States white-dominated versions of cultural pluralism. To remember old Hyderabad as a successful plural society makes it a useful model not only for modern India but for the Western

secular multicultural societies in which many Hyderabadis live today. To remember it as a successful Islamic state serves those Hyderabadis who sought to recapture it by migrating to Pakistan. To remember it as a failed Islamic state paradoxically inspires some Muslims in the West, minorities in predominantly Christian countries, who say that religious freedom now lets them be better (uncompromised, that is, not tainted by Hindu practices) Muslims abroad.

The next and quite obvious point is that emigrants went to their destinations at different points in time and those nation-states themselves have been changing. The Pakistan promised in 1947 is not the Pakistan of today. The Hyderabadis who went there are still termed *muhâjir* or exile and held at a distance by the "sons of the soil" in the state. "How can we be refugees, when we are coming to our homeland?" one man lamented. Even their children, who term themselves Pakistanis, Sindhis, Lahoris, do not always have their self-perceptions confirmed by their fellow citizens.¹² The Gulf states, receptive and rewarding to numerous Hyderabadis of all classes and backgrounds in the 1970s and 80s, have become problematic sites today, as they take their pick of workers from all over the world and train their own young people to take the jobs expatriates have long held there.¹³ This means that some Hyderabadis migrants feel they miscalculated - they went abroad for specific purposes, and perhaps for limited times, but their strategies to either settle or return have been thwarted by political and/or economic developments, so they are recalculating. Thus many Hyderabadis in Pakistan are sending their children out for education and probable migration, and middle-class Hyderabadis working in the Gulf have been seduced by the dazzling technology, material prosperity, and rampant consumerism there into abandoning their plans to retire to their homelands. Many of these expatriates in the Gulf are planning, for the sake of their childrens' futures more than their own, to make further moves abroad, to settle in the Western countries to which friends and relatives have already gone.

Another example of a changing nation-state is Australia, which earlier allowed Britishers from India (then called Anglo

Indians) but kept out Asians. Australia has changed its policies and is perhaps the most popular place for Hyderabad emigrants of all backgrounds and classes today. It is in Sydney that the famous Hyderabad cricket team, the Deccan Blues, has been reincarnated, with team members of all religious backgrounds. The Australia-bound Hyderabadis include many Parsis and Anglo-Indians, some of whom are twice-migrants by way of the UK. As Australia has become receptive to immigrants, the other western states have been tightening their immigration policies, making it somewhat harder to migrate to the UK and the US, not quite so hard to migrate to Canada.

The last, and most important point, concerns the generational ruptures. I contend that even though some first generation migrants could be truly transnational, their children rarely can be so. This is further complicated by the fact that many first generation immigrants, admitting that they are settled permanently abroad and will not be returning, are bringing their aging parents to settle with them in their new homelands, reintroducing strains on the best of transnational intentions. The parents (and grandparents) may think of the children as South Asian and Hyderabad, heirs to an identity which is an extension in space and time of what Ferguson and Gupta call "a prior natural identity rooted in locality and community",¹⁴ but the Hyderabad children being raised abroad do not and cannot share that ancestral world. Situated outside of Hyderabad, not sharing the physical space or socio-cultural landscape nostalgically recalled by their elders, members of the second generation locate themselves firmly in the Pakistani, American or Australian contexts. They reject identities proudly claimed by their parents and assert new ones.¹⁵ Young Anglo Indians in Australia become Indian not British, youngsters in the US become Indian or Pakistani or Asian American, youngsters in Britain may become Black British, British Asian, or British Muslim.

In conclusion, I wish to stress that nation-states are powerful determinants of personal identity and behavior, in reality as well as in imagination. It is hard to sustain dual loyalties and harder still to exercise them. Networks across national

boundaries are still shaped by the laws of the nation-states involved.¹⁶ Those who sustained personal transnational networks, I found, were most often schoolmates. "We went to school together", "his sister was in my class", "she and my wife were classmates", and variations on these remarks were almost always the very first response when I named people we both knew. School ties frequently explained expensive and difficult journeys to attend reunions and weddings. But the members of the second generation are being schooled in the new homelands, forming friendships with co-learners of Pakistani, Australian, British, Canadian, or American history and culture.

To attempt a summing up, after these brief glimpses of the material I have gathered, migrants do bring with them "peculiar allegiances and alienations"¹⁷ associated with Hyderabad, their nation of origin, but they and the communities they build in their new homes are strongly shaped by the nation-states in which they settle. And for the second generation there is no question that their parents' Hyderabad homeland, however remembered, rejected, or reinvented, is no longer theirs.

ENDNOTES

- (1) See Karen Leonard, "Mulki-non-Mulki Conflict in Hyderabad State", in Robin Jeffrey (ed.), *People, Princes and Paramount Power: Society and Politics in the Indian Princely States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 65-108. Peoples' working definitions of mulki differ: some restrict membership in the mulki category to those resident in the Deccan since before or close to the mid-18th century (the Mughal conquest), while others include immigrants to Hyderabad up to the late 19th century but bar those coming in after that. Some think that even now people can become Hyderabadis through knowledge and appreciation of Hyderabad history.
- (2) Karen Leonard, "The Hyderabad Political System and its Participants", *Journal of Asian Studies* (May, 1971), pp. 569-582.
- (3) Karen Leonard, "Mulki-non-Mulki Conflict in Hyderabad State".

- (4) See Carolyn Elliott, "Decline of a Patrimonial Regime: The Telengana Rebellion in India, 1946-51", *Journal of Asian Studies*, 34:1 (November 1974), pp. 27-47; Karen Leonard, "Aspects of the Nationalist Movement in the Princely States of India", *Quarterly Review of Historical Studies*, XXI: 2 & 3 (1981-82), pp. 3-9; and Omar Khalidi (ed.), *Hyderabad: After the Fall* (Wichita, Kansas: Hyderabad Historical Society, 1988), especially the article by W.C. Smith.
- (5) Jyotindira Das Gupta, *Language Conflict and National Development* (Berkeley: University of California, 1970).
- (6) Karen Leonard, "The Deccani Synthesis in Old Hyderabad: An Historiographic Essay", *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* (October, 1973), pp. 205-218.
- (7) Stuart Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity", especially pp. 275-277, in Stuart Hall, David Held and Tony McGrew (eds.), *Modernity and Its Futures* (London: Polity Press, Open University, 1992); James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta, "Culture, Power, Place: Ethnography at the End of an Era", introduction to James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta (eds.), *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology* (Duke: 1997), p. 7.
- (8) I was able to get a Fulbright grant in 1992 and 1993 for work in Pakistan, and a Committee on American Overseas Research Centers grant in 1995 and 1996 for work in the Gulf states and Pakistan, and for these I am very grateful. For trips to Hyderabad (1991, 1993, 1994, 1996, and 1997), the UK (1991, 1992, 1997, and 1999), Australia (1993), Canada (1994, 1997, and 2000), Pakistan (again in 1994, 1995, and 1999), and parts of the U.S. (1991-1999), I got help from various internal sources at the University of California, Irvine, or funded the trips myself.
- (9) South Asian immigrants are often perceived as "black" by others in Britain: See Iain Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity* (London: Routledge, 1994), who states, "Here to be 'black' can be a political and cultural term of identification among diverse groups of Caribbean, African and Asian inheritance held in a

shared field of representations, rather than employed as a self-referring biological category or racial bloc" (p. 86); and Paul Gilroy, *There ain't no Black in the Union Jack: the cultural politics of race and nation* (London: Hutchinson, 1987). This view has been challenged by Tariq Modood, whose 1994 "Political Blackness and British Asians", *Sociology* 28:6, pp. 859-876, sets out the situation for the 1990s.

- (10) Aziz Ahmed reported the first, London, 1991; Nawab Mir Mohsin Ali Khan recited the poem, London, 1991.
- (11) Karen Leonard, "The Deccani Synthesis in Old Hyderabad: An Historiographic Essay", *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, 1973, pp. 205-218; Syed Sirajuddin, "Deccan-Hyderabad Culture", mss., Hyderabad, 1990; Helen B. Butt (ed.), *The Composite Nature of Hyderabad Culture* (Hyderabad: Intercultural Cooperation Hyderabad Chapter & Osmania University, 1990).
- (12) Karen Leonard, "Hyderabadis in Pakistan: Changing Nations", in Crispin Bates (ed.), *Community, Empire, and Migration: South Asians in Diaspora* (London: Macmillan, 2000).
- (13) Karen Leonard, "Guests in the Gulf: South Asian Women", in Esha De and Sonita Sarkar (eds.), *South Asian Women in the Gulf: Families and Futures Reconfigured* (Duke University Press, forthcoming); and also "South Asian Workers in the Gulf: Jockeying for Places", in William Maurer and Richard Perry (eds.), *Guests in the Gulf: South Asian Expatriates* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming).
- (14) James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta, "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference", *Cultural Anthropology* 7:2 (1992), .
- (15) Third countries can be brought into play in the creative invention of new identities in the diaspora, particularly by members of the second generation but also by members of the first. I think of the Hyderabad families in Melbourne, Australia, trying to organise a Hyderabad association there. Many of the parents in-

volved had worked in the Middle East but most of them came from India; nevertheless, emphasising their religious identity in a context where Muslim political coalitions are becoming important, many had joined the local Pakistan, not India, association there. In contrast, the youngsters seemed to identify as Indians. One young girl, a staunch Muslim who vehemently criticised Saudi Arabia as unIslamic because it did not value women, confided that she and her friends thought it ridiculous to confine the new association to Hyderabadis, they wanted to invite friends from Bombay and other parts of India to the meetings. She was also fighting with her mother for the right to wear a tank top, arguing that her mother's sari blouse bared the midriff just as much and was unIslamic to boot.

- (16) Where weddings are held, for example, now depends not only on where key relatives are, but how easily those people can get visas to particular countries. People carefully consider the bureaucratic problems and costs that will be involved, not only the travel but the wedding arrangements and facilities for putting up the guests. Consider one "transnational" Hyderabad wedding, where the bride lived in Kuwait, the groom in the US, and key family members resided in India, Pakistan, and various other sites around the world. In this case, the wedding was held in Dubai, in the UAE, where visas and South Asian things could be gotten most easily.
- (17) James Clifford, "Notes on Theory and Travel", in James Clifford and Vivek Dhareshwar (ed.), *Traveling Theory Traveling Theorists* (Santa Cruz: Center for Cultural Studies, 1989), p. 187.