HYDERABADIS ABROAD: MEMORIES OF HOME

Karen Isaksen Leonard, UC Irvine--for ASA conference, Keele, April 2006

I summarize here the major findings of my fifteen-year study of emigrants from Hyderabad, Deccan, to Pakistan, the UK, Australia, the US, Canada, and the Gulf states of Kuwait and the UAE.[1] The study, begun in the 1990s, traces primarily those who still identified to some extent with the Nizam's former state of Hyderabad, those who called themselves mulkis (countrymen) and knew the Indo-Muslim or Mughlai culture that once reigned in Hyderabad city and state. The study emphasizes the ruptures of 1948 and 1956 (Police Action and India's Linguistic States Reorganization that ended Hyderabad State's independence and divided it among three new linguistic states), calling attention to the changing urban landscape as Hyderabad city became capital of Andhra Pradesh. This paper, however, focuses on the emigrants, those who self-identified as Hyderabadis in their new homes abroad.

Locating Hyderabadis in their original home and then following them abroad involved careful consideration of seven contexts in addition to Hyderabad and India, contexts that were changing even as individuals and communities were changing. The Hyderabadis acted as agents in reformulating their identities abroad, identities shaped by their locations in both old and new settings, but their actions were constrained or encouraged by nation-states and by differing national constellations of fellow immigrants and citizens. The study compares not only the new sites but the sending societies, in this case not only Hyderabad and India but Pakistan,[2] and it illustrates the ways in which cities and nations and global forces compete for and shape the identities of citizens.[3] The voices of the migrants show that they theorized meaningfully about

their own movements and that those movements were both materially and ideologically produced. Their voices and further detailing of their backgrounds, networks, and views explode the notion of a "diasporic community" and highlight differences among the emigrants and their differential reworkings of identities in the new sites.[4] These emigrants were not transnationals, in the sense of carrying bounded worlds abroad with them, but cosmopolitans, very much reshaped by their new countries, new configurations of fellow citizens, and second generational differences from the generation that made the move.

I discuss here only two aspects of the diaspora, two parts of William's Safran's six part definition of diasporic populations: retaining collective memories of the homeland and defining a collective consciousness through a continuing relationship to the homeland.[5] I gathered rich materials about the remembering and forgetting of Hyderabad by those abroad. Most first generation Hyderabadi immigrants in countries other than Pakistan retained a very positive collective memory of old Hyderabad that was an important part of their consciousness and often of their collective life abroad. Hyderabad has become an integral part of Andhra Pradesh and India, but those Hyderabadis who lived in the Nizam's state and many of their children had a lingering sense of loyalty to a state that they viewed as equal to British India and relatively free from communal tensions. Some Hyderabadis proudly proclaimed Hyderabad's cultural synthesis a model for all of India and pointed to Osmania University's pioneering role in the development of vernacular education for the masses. But the ideas about a Deccani synthesis and Hyderabadi culture were qualified in their time, and they became harder to maintain in the face of rising Hindu communalism and the decline of Urdu, a language that does not have a territorial base in India.

Most self-identified Hyderabadis abroad were first generation migrants over the age of fifty who claimed some connection with the old Hyderabad state or its urban Indo-Muslim culture. They continued to use the term mulki as a meaningful social category even when discussing emigrants. Many still voiced the traditional historical narrative so central to their own family histories, that Hyderabad was a successful plural society, perhaps even a cultural synthesis.[6] As Andrew Shryock wrote about an aspiring historian of the Beduoin tribes in Jordan, "Muhammad is a victim of the real historical power of the 'Adwan [his own tribe]. His identity is firmly grounded in the shaykhly era, and the memory of local might–now reduced to a kind of haughty nostalgia–makes new identities hard to imagine in any terms other than loss."[7] Hyderabadis from the former ruling class, and not only in the UK, tended to privilege that version of the past based on hierarchies of both caste and class. Their ways of thinking were akin to what Shryock has called a "genealogical imagination," "a tendency to parse society into discrete, vertical chains of inheritance and transmission, some of them biological, others intellectual, and others still a combination of the two."[8] These Hyderabadis did not appreciate my inclusion of a wide range of informants and conflicting versions of the past. The versions of old Hyderabad produced by some Hindus and Anglo Indians that emphasized the "Muslim" nature of the elite and, in some cases, gave importance to the British Resident, were strange to them.

Many Hyderabadi emigrants took with them romantic notions of Hyderabadi culture, usually conceptualized by the end of the century as surviving better in the diaspora than in the homeland. However, the exact nature of the Hyderabad emigrants claimed as their homeland was clearly a matter of contention. Ideas about old Hyderabad varied significantly, depending

partly on one's age and status in the old society but also on one's status in the new location and the national narratives of the new states. Hyderabadi culture was being drawn upon differently, redefined, and sometimes consciously discarded in the new locations. It had at least three uses abroad. First, people celebrated the Hyderabadi culture of the past and talked about the virtues of the old state, its royalty, and its cultural synthesis. This stance was a primarily private and nostalgic one and inspired most of the initial invitational Hyderabad Associations abroad. Second, people affirmed an ongoing Hyderabadi cultural synthesis and saw it as not only still meaningful but useful in the public arena, analogous to notions of secular pluralism in some of the new countries. This activist stance also played a role in the rhetoric of many Hyderabad Associations, often at slightly later stages of their development as membership expanded. It was used, too, by Hyderabadis working to build multicultural alliances, like political coalitions with other South Asians, religious interfaith efforts, or professional coalitions.

A third stance involved fairly drastic reinterpretations of Hyderabadi culture. The assimilative powers of the new national print cultures, most powerfully the nations of India and Pakistan, pulled the old Hyderabad narrative in different directions. The Pakistani version saw Hyderabad as an Islamic state and the Indian version saw it as a backward, feudal society, interpretations anticipated by political groups within Hyderabad in the 1930s and 40s. Among emigrants, the most powerful reinterpretations invoked Islam to challenge the dominant narrative of the former state. One version was that Hyderabad was really an Islamic state all along and the cultural synthesis was a myth, a view that could be voiced by Hindus and Muslims alike. Another version was that Hyderabad was a failed Islamic state, that the cultural synthesis, while real, evidenced the Nizam's failure to establish a truly Islamic state. To remember Hyderabad as

either a successful or failed Islamic state well served those Hyderabadis who sought to recapture or replace Hyderabad by migrating to Pakistan. To remember it as a failed Islamic state paradoxically inspired some Muslims, minorities in predominantly Christian countries, to say that religious freedom in the west permitted them be better Muslims abroad, where their religion was not tainted by Hindu practices. These Hyderabadi Muslims stressed Islamic ideals and built alliances with other Muslims in the new settings, distancing themselves from Hyderabadis organizing on the basis of culture or language in the new settings. First generation immigrants voiced all these stances. Unsurprisingly, the nostalgic and plural society interpretations were held by those best placed in both old and new societies, while the interpretation stressing Islam was held by those less well placed in both. These "Islamic twists" to the Hyderabad narrative also found places in some Hyderabad associations, even, arguably, in the most recent sets of officers in both London and Toronto.

The place of Islam and Muslims in the Hyderabad of the past was the most contentious issue. While not endorsing views of Hyderabad as an Islamic state, the upper classes among the Anglo Indians and the Hindus oriented themselves to what they termed "the Muslim side" of traditional Hyderabad society. Those in the military and those of high rank in the state administration reflected this most. The schools most important in shaping lasting friendship networks were dominated by the Indo-Muslim or Mughlai culture of the ruling class. Even the Australian principal of St. George's had to know Hyderabadi Urdu and Mughlai culture. The Anglo Indians in Australia from the lower classes, for example, those who worked for the Railway, spoke more often of the British Resident, seeing the shadow of the colonial power behind the Nizam's throne buttressing their position in Hyderabad State. Similarly perhaps, the

shadow of an Islamic state behind the Nizam's throne seemed empowering to lower-class Muslims, a shadow emerging into full view overseas and embodied in Muslim organizations and institutions being built by pan-ethnic Muslim populations in the western sites.[9]

The role of the state emerged as central in all the diasporic settings. The kinds of national projects being undertaken by the states in which Hyderabadis were settling differed markedly, and these new national narratives powerfully influenced immigrant interpretations of the homeland culture. Pakistan's Punjabi-dominated and increasingly polarized society had no comfortable place for a Hyderabadi identity. British, Canadian, Australian, and United States versions of cultural pluralism could accommodate old Hyderabad as a successful plural society. In the western countries where many Hyderabadis lived, differing constellations of indigenous and immigrant populations offered opportunities for political alliances and social networks beyond the Hyderabadi emigrant community, including new marriage patterns and religious organizations for some immigrants.

A Hyderabadi emigrant collective consciousness based upon relationships with the homeland also involved close relationships with Hyderabadis in other diasporic sites. George Marcus writes, "The sense of the system beyond the particular site of research remains contingent and not assumed,"[10] but to a very large extent the larger canvas was in mind, for me and my informants, as we talked about people's movements and memories. This was true even in cases of erasure or repression of memories. Hyderabadi immigrants in each site had a sense of what was going on in other sites and often compared and contrasted experiences. This was least true for those in Pakistan, where the immigrants' own prospects depended to some extent on deliberate erasure of connections to Indian relatives, and those in the UK were somewhat slow to

sense the broader ebbs and flows, complacent in their sense of having selected the very best destination. I, the researcher, was part of that wider consciousness, playing the role of "circumstantial activist" by both seeking and conveying information and opinions as I moved from site to site.[11] I was interested in mappings of the diaspora as an intellectual exercise, but emigrants were interested in such mappings for their own strategic purposes or those of their friends and relatives.

The collective activities of the immigrants, the associations they formed or joined and their maintenance of social networks brought from Hyderabad, were important measures of the persistence of the Hyderabadi identity abroad. The absence or presence of the Hyderabad associations seemed correlated with the strength of the first generation's commitment to traditional notions of mulki identity, notions founded in pride of ancestry and closeness to power in the former state. Where such immigrants from Hyderabad were numerous enough, as in the UK and North American cities like Toronto, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Houston, efforts were made to establish associations and maintain a Hyderabadi identity.[12] Where the earliest immigrants were not from the elite or where Hyderabadi identity served no useful purpose, as in Australia and many American settings, or where Hyderabadi identity was a disadvantage, as in Pakistan, Hyderabad associations were not established or were weak. Where multiclass and often multinational groups supported other kinds of associations, like Urdu, Muslim, Indian or Pakistani associations, these thrived with varying degrees of Hyderabadi participation. Linguistic associations, chiefly Urdu and Telugu ones,[13] attracted immigrants from Hyderabad. Everywhere, spoken Hyderabadi Urdu continued to distinguish Hyderabadis from other speakers of Urdu.[14] In Pakistan, however, it marked a negative ethnic identity.

National policies structured decisions and actions and formed cultural orientations. Educational institutions and their orientations to government service loomed large in people's memories. The schools in Hyderabad--Madras-i-Aliya, Mahbubiyah, Nizam College, St. George's Grammar School, Public School or Jagirdar's College, Osmania University, and Residency Women's College--that shaped Hyderabad's elite had lasting impacts on networks abroad.[15] A major finding was the importance of these school networks. Schoolmates and classmates filled both instrumental and expressive roles for emigrants, and the classmate cohorts affected sibling and friendship and marital networks as well. Leading educators were reference figures, from the Australian Reverend Bellingham of St. George's and the British Miss Linnell of Mahbubiyah Girls School to the Americans William Mulder and Peace Corps and Kansas State teachers.

National policies, changes of language in schools, spurred emigration in numerous instances. Urdu's place at the top of the administrative, literary, and educational domains in Hyderabad was unchallenged until 1948, even as the regional vernaculars gained importance through expanded secondary education and the Library Movement in Hyderabad State. Urdu's displacement, at first gradual and by English in elite higher educational institutions, and then abrupt and by Hindi and Telugu as well and at all levels of the administrative and educational systems, has had continuing repercussions on Hyderabadis at home and abroad. India's three-language policy spelled doom for Anglo Indian and Indo-Muslim culture alike, and Anglo Indians and Muslims adapted or migrated. In Pakistan, even though Urdu became the national language, the dominance of Punjabi-speakers and the rootedness of the regional vernaculars helped reduce muhajir influence. In the Gulf, Urdu and Indo-Muslim culture flourished in the

UAE but Arabic and Arabic culture dominated in Kuwait, differentially shaping migrant experiences. Despite the gradual decline of Urdu in India, Urdu literary societies functioned throughout the diaspora and maintained a more truly international set of vital, inclusive first generation linkages overseas than any other associational activity.

The final point concerns the fluidity of the remembering and forgetting of the homeland, a process more fluid because Hyderabadi emigrants initially moved without supporting casts, without the servants or members of the older generation who had been crucial to the transmission and maintenance of Hyderabadi culture. The role of servants came up again and again, their presence, absence, or degree of cultural knowledge an indicator of the strength of Hyderabadi culture in any site, including Hyderabad, where servants who knew the old culture are now few and hard to get. There was a growing tendency to bring aging parents to live abroad, especially in Australia, Canada, and the US. (The immigrants in Pakistan were less able to do this, constrained by parental commitments to Hyderabad or by politics, while those in the UK had settled earlier when parents were less mobile and those working in the Gulf were constrained by legal regimes.) In recent decades, emigrants moving as families have eventually resettled their parents abroad, putting the burden of cultural maintenance on women, whether mothers or grandmothers, and I talk about this in the book.

James Clifford has characterized people migrating as "changed by their travel but marked by places of origin, by peculiar allegiances and alienations."[16] In the book, there is much about the "peculiar allegiances and alienations" associated with Hyderabad and also of the changes brought about by travel. The Deccani cultural synthesis was not entirely a myth. An urban-based Indo-Muslim culture connected members of the ruling class of Hyderabad State's plural

society, and also, to a considerable extent, all mulkis, or former citizens, of that state. Some emigrants tried to maintain and transmit Hyderabadi culture abroad. The Urdu language and one Urdu newspaper, Siyasat, were particularly important to emigrants.

Abundant details from the interviews evidenced close friendships across religious and linguistic lines, friendships among emigrants and those who stayed at home. The interviews provided eloquent testimony to international journeys, old boy and old girl networks, and some associational activities that kept people actively in touch with one another. The very strongest network that many first-generation Hyderabadi emigrants tried to sustain was that of classmates or 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 first response when I named people met elsewhere. Being classmates or schoolmates most frequently explained expensive and difficult journeys to attend reunions and weddings. But the members of the second generation were being schooled in the new homelands. They were forming friendships with co-learners of Pakistani, Australian, British, or North American history and culture and heading for careers in their new nations.

The generational differences emerged clearly in all of the research sites. Some young people of Hyderabadi background in both Canada and the US claimed to be "first generation" because they were the first generation born or raised abroad. They thought of themselves as very different from their parents, decisively formed by the new context and not by Hyderabad. Another cohort, that of parents brought to North America, also contained some members who claimed to be first generation. Since they were older, some parents (especially men with successful careers behind them) asserted this, even though they were following their children.

Their deliberate attempt to appropriate the term for themselves could be the diasporic English language equivalent of contests over mulki/non-mulki or muhajir/non-muhajir status in India and Pakistan. Western social scientists should acknowledge the unsettled nature of these generational categories in the minds of immigrants.[17] Who was a native and who was a newcomer was a controversial and socially meaningful issue in all these cases, involving claims to citizenship and national identity. These terms signaled cultural claims to power in new settings.

The Hyderabadi experiences abroad speak to the selective shaping of new national identities, the forgetting of much about Hyderabad but the mobilization of memories to claim places in new homes abroad. Jonathan Boyarin, discussing Maurice Halbwachs' seminal 1950 work On Collective Memory, commented that Halbwachs spoke not of fantasies or of people defining themselves as a collective in the present, but of the invocation of memories based on family, schoolmates, and village, of the shared reminiscences linking given sets of people in the past.[18] Here it was not a village but a city, a city that symbolized a state and its Indo-Muslim culture, that was the subject of memory and of research.

While first generation Hyderabadis abroad drew on memories and networks based on families and localities, schools and schoolmates, in old Hyderabad, such memories and networks were not successfully extended to the second generation in any of the sites abroad. Jacob Climo also writes of memory, defining transmitted or “vicarious” memory as "strong, personal identifications with historical collective memories that belong to people other than those who experienced them directly." Vicarious memories, he specifies, are passed through strong emotional attachments from generation to generation in groups that share not only a common

historical identity but also the process of its redefinition.[19] Talking to members of the second generation, one was struck by the absence of cross-generational vicarious memories. For the descendants of the Hyderabadis abroad, there could not be an absorption and assimilation of a continuing identity, but rather responses to an interruption, a consciousness of difference. At best, the descendants tried to constitute and interrogate their parents' memories, which in any case invoked a range of interpretations and uses of Hyderabadi culture. The powerful new conceptions of citizenship in the new nation-states reoriented memories and shaped the evolving personal and national identities of the young people of Hyderabadi ancestry and even of their parents. Privileging the homeland in relation to a diaspora proved less relevant than careful examination of the changes wrought by state policies and regulations, new demographic configurations, and the identity politics of the new homelands.

The extent of the changes in Hyderabad itself also helps to explain the generational rupture, but the chief reason is that the children of the immigrants identify strongly as citizens of the new nations. Elements of Hyderabadi culture may continue if they appear useful to the children's futures, for example, multicultural values in a plural society, respect and courtesy in everyday relations with others, or the winning tastes of foods like bagara began and Hyderabadi biryani as they enter the "multicuisines" of the destination countries. The nation-states in which the Hyderabadi emigrants reside and work set the parameters for their participation in their new sites, marking members of the first generation and definitively shaping the identities of members of the second and subsequent generations.

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[1] Locating Home: India's Hyderabadis Abroad, to be published in 2006 by Stanford University Press.

[2]Few studies of migration involve more than two receiving societies and few examine the impact of emigration and transnationalism on the sending society, according to Caroline B. Brettell and James F. Hollifield, Migration Theory: Talking Across Disciplines (New York: Routledge, 2000) 13, 18.

[3]James Holston and Arjun Appadurai, "Cities and Citizenship," Public Culture 8:2 (1996) argued that cities are challenging and replacing nations as the important space of citizenship. Cities vary, of course, and I would argue that Hyderabad city was far more important in the past as an urban space of citizenship, one located in a lingering Indo-Muslim cultural sphere. However, it is clearly becoming an important node in the operations of globally oriented capital and labor (a topic for another study) and part of an emergent globalized structure of feeling, of which more below.

[4]I draw here on Rachel Silvey and Victoria Lawson, "Placing the Migrant," Annals of the Association of American Geographers 89:1 (1999), 122-23.

[5] William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," Diaspora l:l (1991).

[6]Karen Leonard, "The Deccani Synthesis in Old Hyderabad: An Historiographic Essay," Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society, October, 1973; Helen B. Butt,ed. 1990. The Composite Nature of Hyderabadi Culture. Hyderabad: Intercultural Cooperation Hyderabad Chapter & Osmania University (1990); Syed Sirajuddin, "Deccan-Hyderabadi Culture." Hyderabad: private manuscript, 1990).

[7]Andrew Shryock, "Tribes and the Print Trade: Notes from the Margins of Literate Culture in Jordan," American Anthropologist 98:1 (1996,) 39. Shryock discusses, here and in his1997 book Nationalism and the Genealogical Imagination (Berkeley: University of California Press), identities based on received versions of particular tribal histories that conflict with other versions and with new, modern assimilative languages of identity circulating in print culture and at the level of the nation-state. Like Shryock, I collected oral materials often based on genealogical notions of transmission and authenticity.

[8]As Andrew Shryock, "Writing Oral History in Tribal Jordan: Developments on the Margins of Literate Culture," Anthropology Today (1995), 5, says, this was not a way of thinking that was purely tribal, but of "a larger political and historical discourse... which owes its legitimacy to voices and identities which are much older... [than Hashemite Jordan]."

[9]See Karen Isaksen Leonard, Muslims in the United States: the State of Research (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2003).

[10]George E. Marcus, "Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography," Annual Review of Anthropology 24 (1995), 110.

[11]For most sites, I made return visits or sent drafts to informants to obtain comments and updates.

[12]Hindu Kayasths abroad conspicuously continued to associate with Hyderabadi Muslim emigrants and help to form Hyderabad Associations. This, according to critics, reproduced the old elite partnership that celebrated Mughlai culture and Urdu rather than other vernacular languages in Hyderabad State.

[13]Political associations competed for the Telugu-speakers: the Telugu Association of North America was dominated by members of the Kamma caste and the American Telugu Association is dominated by members of the Reddy caste.

[14]C.M. Naim. Professor of Urdu at the University of Chicago, remarked that the Hyderabadi habit of speaking Urdu when together meant that their children knew only Hyderabadi Urdu; he found their ignorance of "standard" Urdu was a problem when they attended his classes. But language was the only marker of difference for the second generation Hyderabadis, he said; they were like other second-generation immigrants from India in all other respects.

[15]Richard T. Antoun, "Transnational Migration for Higher Education: A Comparison Jordanians in Greece and Pakistan" (paper at the American Anthropological Association, Philadelphia, Dec. 3, 1998), suggests that academics underestimate the importance of their own occupation, of the impact of higher education and the institutions that deliver it, and I agree.

[16]James Clifford, "Notes on Theory and Travel," in Traveling Theory Traveling Theorists, edited by James Clifford and Vivek Dhareshwar (Santa Cruz: Center for Cultural Studies Clifford 1989), 185.

[17]Interestingly, I found the same situation among the children of the Punjabi Mexican couples whom I studied in the 1980s, the same proud assertion that they were the "first generation" of Americans: Making Ethnic Choices: California's Punjabi Mexican Americans (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992).

[18]Jonathan Boyarin, "Space, Time, and the Politics of Memory," In Remapping Memory: The Politics of TimeSpace, edited by Jonathan Boyarin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1994), 23 et passim.

[19]Jacob Climo, "Prisoners of Silence: A Vicarious Holocaust Memory." In The Labyrinth of Memory: Ethnographic Journeys, edited by Marea C. Teski and Jacob J. Climo (Westport, Conn: Bergin and Garvey, 1995), 176.