INTRODUCTION

With the passage of time the scope of History has been widened, and new areas are included in it. It is growing in its extent as well. The affairs of men and nations are constantly in motion. Consequently there has been a radical change in recent years as to the proper nature and scope of history. Historians have now a more humanistic approach which takes into account all the multifarious activities of man. History is becoming more and more the history of the people. In the light of the changes taking place in the world in terms of new interpretations and approaches to the study of history, Indian Historiography too manifests, new trends and facts in the writing of history. Our historians are giving increasing attention to the socio-cultural dimension of the people's life.

Ideally considered, social history is the study of the structure and process of human action and interaction as they have occurred with socio-cultural content in the recorded past.¹ A vital element of the social history of

the people in the study of communities. In brief it refers to the study of a group of people with common characteristics and interests living together within a large society. A community is thus a relatively small isolated centre with a static population, in which all economic and social services necessary to life can be maintained. In this set up the private individual has little value apart from the group. Modern scholars term this aspect of historiography as 'historical sociology'.

Studies in the migration of communities indicate that the process, volume and direction of people in the movement from one place to another are influenced by a large number of factors. As a result of migration people have to adjust themselves to societies and cultures of the place to which they migrate. A few studies have been made on some communities settled in India like the "Parsis in India," "The East Indian Community" "The Goan Society in transition," "The Madars of Tamilnadu," "The Muslims of Bengal," "The Gujarati Muslims." The significant element in the community consists

of the common culture, combined with the various modes of organisations, which make the culture effective and operative. As a result each community will have its own organisations and institutions. The people in a community will feel a sense of unity and solidarity. They find expression through institutions. 3

The present study is a modest attempt to highlight the presence of the Muslim Community in the urban setting of Anantapur. The Muslims who form a community and whose presence is felt in different walks of life in Anantapur form a considerable percentage of the local population. The Muslims constitute the greatest minority in India. This feeling of minority have always rested in their minds and this syndrome is reflected through their action and policies. The main purpose of this dissertation is to focus attention on the process of transition in the Muslim Community of Anantapur in religious, social, economic, cultural, educational and civic aspects, especially during the post-Independence era.

There is a felt need for community studies in contemporary India. In the olden days community studies were mixed up with Communal overtones and hence there was a prejudice and aversion to undertake such investigation. Now times are changing and conditions are conducive for generating enquiries of the subaltern sections at the micro-level. India is conceived as one and indivisible entity. Small communities and people go to make the most fascinating mosaic of what India is today. Each community is passing through traumatic changes. Each is contributing to the general welfare in its own way. Each at the same time is conscious of its age-old traditions and cultural ethos which give them identity. A large community like the Indian Muslims has not been studied in an unbiased perspective. The Muslims are much maligned people. Hence regional and community studies have a rationale for historic investigation and claim priority in research in the modern Indian context.

The Muslims of Anantapur form a vital and vibrant portion of the local population. Their origins can be traced to the days of the Islamic advent into the Deccan. They are very much present in the life of the town and have contributed to its varied development. More than anything, they live in
peace and harmony with the other communities. Their interaction with others is positive and constructive and is a good example of peaceful co-existence and community participation, to be emulated by others.

The period of investigation has necessarily to be limited to the contemporary scene in view of many factors. No study of the Muslim presence in Anantapur or for that matter in Rayalaseema, has been made so far. This investigation borders on a pioneering work of a challenging nature. The problem of source is formidable. There is a paucity of well documented written evidence. In the matter of oral sources, the people who were interviewed exercised caution and reservations. Collection and centralisation of documents on a viable basis has not been done. The Community is deplorably lacking any sense of history and preserving historical evidence.

This being so the investigator has to depend mostly on secondary sources, Government Gazetteers, Census and Administrative Reports and personal interviews with the cross-section of the Muslim population. This kind of source, of course has its own limitations. This brief survey of the
presence and activities of the local Muslim community seeks to construct the history of the community on the basis of the available evidence. The researcher is well aware of the lacuna as far as the sources are concerned.

The study has essentially to be confined to a short span of three decades from 1955 to 1985. For a study of a people it is difficult to fix a starting point, as it is an evolving concept. Here the starting point is a more settled period following the formation of the Andhra Pradesh. This time-frame is relevant in terms of reasonable data and also the Muslim Community's endeavours to respond positively to the various challenges faced and also its presence is more concretely evident.

This study is an attempt to place an important and creative minority as the Muslim Community of Anantapur in the historical context and to reconstruct their experience. Three dimensions emerge in the context of the Muslim experience in Anantapur.

1. Their origin and development in the area traditionally known as Rayalaseema with special reference to Anantapur town.
2. What have the Muslims of Anantapur contributed to the all-round development of the town?

3. What is the nature and extent of the interaction between the Muslims and the other communities?

These questions have to be analysed and answered to them found in the light of data relating to the Muslim participation in the process of change and continuity. The researcher aims at treating the Muslim experience in Anantapur not as an isolated reality, but as an integral part of Indian History. Here the Muslim presence is sought to be viewed as part and parcel of the socio-cultural history of the Indian people, rather than as separate from it.