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Project Proposal on  
**“Survey and Documentation of Rock Formations in Some Districts of Andhra Pradesh to Promote Conservation and Sustainable Tourism”**

**Introduction**

The earth started forming about 4.6 billion years ago. The upper part of the earth's crust comprises of a variety of rocks by the action of volcanism, metamorphism, weathering and sedimentation. Peninsular India, which contains the Deccan Plateau, mostly comprises of hard crystalline rocks formed by consolidation and crystallisation of magma, like granites and gneisses, referred to as Basement Complex. The relative position of the granites and associated rocks and the chronological studies suggests an age of 2.5 billion years. These rocks are amongst the oldest rocks in the world and form the basement of all the younger rocks formed after them in the region.

The gneissic rocks of Peninsular India, which lie exposed in parts of Andhra Pradesh, have weathered over million years to produce the rock formations that we observe today. The weathering and sedimentation has also prepared the ground for living organisms to live there. Most of them harbour micro flora and fauna and many are known to support water conservation by generating waterfalls, springs and streams and recharging ground water through subterranean passages. They are also responsible for formation of lakes and other water bodies.

Unfortunately, most of them face rapid destruction from quarrying for metal or stones for construction. Their destruction will mean a loss of not only a rich heritage having intrinsic as well as recreational and tourist value but also of natural features having botanical, zoological and geological importance that may hold the key to our future environmental health.

**Objectives:**

1. To protect and preserve rocks as geological and ecological heritage.
2. To prevent destruction and facilitate sustainable, eco-friendly use of rocks through community mobilisation.
3. To build processes of social responsibility through surveys and documentation of rock sites.
4. To create awareness among various stakeholders viz community, trade unions, NGOs, government departments and scientific societies about the important role of rocks.

## **Details of the Project**

### **Geographical Coverage**

This project proposes to survey and document rock formations in some districts of Andhra Pradesh, in two Phases. In the Phase I, six districts will be covered, viz, Nalgonda, Khammam, Karimnagar, Warangal, Adilabad and Nizamabad. Phase II will cover four districts viz, Kurnool, Anantapur, Chittoor and Cuddapah. All these districts are known to have interesting rock formations, both in the hills and as outcrops. These have very interesting landscapes and ecological features. Many of them are revered by local communities for varying reasons and have, literally become part of their lives. They have too, history behind them, with fortresses and other structures like temples, dargahs etc, built on many of them. They are part of the hydrological regime of the State. Many of them also offer formidable challenges for the rock climbers. Most of them are threatened by quarrying for metal ores, building or other developmental activity.

It is possible to cover in the first round only those districts, which command easy and quick access from Hyderabad by road or train and where the dangers to the rock formations are high due to developmental activities. The area has the Deccan type of rock formations bolstered by the Eastern Ghats hill system. Almost all are very ancient rock systems of great geological, cultural and aesthetic value. They harbour flora and fauna and many support water conservation by recharging ground water through subterranean passages. More studies are required on these aspects after the initial listing. Granites and gneissic, Inselbergs as these rocks can be described, do have many ecological features and considerable regional differences for floristic composition, life forms and species diversity which may unlock many secrets in future for even human well being. This will have to be documented to the extent possible in the first round and followed up later with detailed studies.

### **Organisation's Experience**

The Society to Save the Rocks is a registered Society, which has been in existence for eleven years. It has pioneered work on the study of rock formations in Hyderabad city and its vicinity. It has helped build up public interest in conservation of rocks. Its efforts along with INTACH Hyderabad have resulted in the Government of Andhra Pradesh including nine rock sites in Hyderabad city in the Hyderabad Urban Development Authority (HUDA) regulations as Heritage Precincts. More rocks in and around the twin cities are also likely to be notified. Simultaneously, the Society has been promoting public interest in conservation and sustainable use of the rocks by arranging rock walks, artists camps, disseminating information on the utility (other than quarrying) and cultural as well as aesthetic significance of rocks. All these activities have been well received. The Society to Save Rocks has conducted a detailed survey in Medak, Ranga Reddy and Hyderabad districts. The object was to locate important rock sites and explore such occurrences that call for protection for geo-scientific or environmental reasons. The

report of the survey created awareness and interest among various stakeholders including the government. The government further encouraged The Society to conduct similar surveys in other districts of AP.

Based on its previous experience, the Society is keen to extend this approach to other areas in the State early with a view to get at least major sites notified as National Heritage or Park sites and also get them mentioned in the Revenue records as sites prohibited for alienation or mining. The Society will get this organised on a multi disciplinary basis with a view to study all the features of the rocks and create awareness in the public for sustainable use like places for religio-cultural purposes without destroying them.

## **Activities**

### **1. Survey**

The Society will constitute a Committee to execute the survey, which will include some members of the Executive Committee, representatives of the Government of Andhra Pradesh from the Departments of Revenue, Environment and Forests, Industry, Education and Municipal Administration as also experts in Geology, Botany, Zoology, Landscape Art, and Architecture. Tourism, INTACH-AP and WWF-AP will also be included. The Committee will constitute teams for survey and give them the mandate and the questionnaire to be filled after consulting local people and authorities

Survey teams will have experts in Geology, Botany, Zoology, Hydrology and Architecture. The Committee will ask one of the members to act as the Convenor and Rapporteur. They will begin with a literature survey, visit the field to interact with knowledgeable people to narrow down the more important rock formations and then visit the rocks and nearby villages to canvass the questionnaire and also document their beliefs about the rock. The survey teams will also make sample scientific studies to establish the importance of the rocks necessitating their conservation and also photograph them. Thereafter, the convenor will assemble the material for each district and give the report to the Committee, which will cover, *inter alia*:

- a. Making a list of important rock formations.
- b. Distinctive geo-scientific features including water storage; zoological, botanical and ecological as well as historical, cultural, artistic and religious features.
- c. Location co-ordinates including mode of access like the nearest bus station or railhead and distances and a district map showing the locations.
- d. Measures for conservation and promotion of sustainable tourism incorporating the views of local communities.
- e. Photographs with negatives of all the major rock formations.

The teams will give special advance reports if required, wherever destructive activity like mining is noticed.

## **2. Awareness Building**

The survey method is so designed that it concurrently builds processes of community involvement in the conservation of local heritage.

The local youth are involved in the meetings and discussions and also in conducting the surveys and documentation of local beliefs. This builds up processes of involving larger communities into awareness, preservation and prevention of destruction of their local heritage.

The idea is that the survey would lead to community ownership of their local heritage. The ownership will imply recognition of sacredness of nature, namely rivers, forests, mountains, rocks and all life forms. Unless this is established they cannot be mobilised to prevent the greedy processes of commerce that are so prevalent in society today and responsible for the rapid destruction of rocks.

## **3. Report**

Based on the reports of the survey teams, the Committee will commission the preparation of the final report by an Editorial Board nominated by it.

A Seminar will be held to highlight the findings of the report. The Society will follow up with the State Governments, NGOs, educational institutions, local bodies etc. This will cover early notifications for conservation, formation of local committees, spreading awareness of the heritage and ecological features. The promotion of tourism will be on the basis of not exceeding the carrying capacity of the area and giving some gainful employment to local people. The Society will involve the scientific and other institutions in the follow up through research and studies. The Society will ensure dissemination of the report to the larger public in the country and others interested in the subject abroad and also motivate Central Government to start promoting and stimulating similar interests in other States.

### **Outcomes:**

1. The Final Report
2. Community informed on the issue.
3. A team of dedicated persons, NGOs, Officials, scientists.
4. Govt departments sensitised.
5. Rock sites that are to be notified.
6. Flora and fauna mapping.
7. Lists of rock sites, which could be developed for tourism.