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## SOCIETY TO SAVE ROCKS

Editors: Frauke Quader & Padmini B. Patell

Volume - 103

**Quarterly Newsletter** 

April - June 2022

#### THE CURRENT PLIGHT OF KHAJAGUDA





**Before** 

Current

Fakhruddingutta - the beautiful rock hill of Khajaguda - has generated quite some attention in Hyderabad since February this year. The reason: an area of intense natural beauty, witness to the ancient geological history of the Deccan Plateau and the adventure and recreation spot No. One in our park-starved city full of "development", is a victim of defacement and destruction.

Members of the Great Hyderabad Adventure Club, the Hyderabad Climbers, the Hyderabad Trekkers, the Bicycling Club, Tree Saving Group, Urban Labs, Society to Save Rocks and many other concerned citizens gathered on the Hill on 6.2.2022 to raise their voice against the recent filling-in of a valley in the hill with debris and soil, in a hurried manner during the night, that smacked of illegality. Many boulders, indigenous trees and shrubs were covered completely by a 40 ft. high newly created embankment. And the lay-out of a road around the foot of the hill cut into a considerable amount of boulders.

In 2019, our Society had filed a PIL in the High Court of Telangana, after an attempt at blasting of rocks had been noticed in one of the slopes of the Hill, and had obtained a Stay Order which says that "the rocks .... must not be disturbed or damaged or destroyed" in the hill. This Stay Order has not been vacated till now. The new activities were a clear violation of that order and a brazen attack on the beautiful site. Innumerable visits of activists to various government offices later, there was still no clarity on the culprit of these actions.

Suddenly, the works stopped. Meanwhile, our Society had prepared a Contempt of Court case which was reported in some papers. The government took notice and after Hon.ble Minister K.T. Rama Rao sent a tweet to his administration to look into the matter, some action was taken. The Special Chief Secretary Municipal Administration promised help. Guards were posted at the hill, and a Survey to determine the exact boundaries of the protected areas under the Stay Order was initiated. The road being built around the hill was to be adjusted accordingly. Big question: Will the filled-in debris on top of the hill be removed too?

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It was gratifying to see how supportive the Hyderabad press was: Positive articles on the situation appeared in all the papers, from Hindu and Deccan Chronicle, Tol, New Indian Express to Telangana Today, Siasat and Eenadu as well as other Urdu and Telugu papers. We have collected twelve-and-a-half thousand online signatures and 700 physical signatures on an Appeal to Save Fakhruddingutta/Khajaguda. Can the passion of citizens of Hyderabad for the preservation of one beautiful piece of landscape be better expressed? The many, many visitors to the hill on every weekend, not only adventurers, but families and morning walkers too, testify to the urgent need for more nature and recreation areas in the city.

-Frauke Quader

#### **Rock Walk and Geo-Workshop at MANUU**

The Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) in Gachibowli is home to many unique rock formations which have been thoughtfully integrated and preserved by the University.

On 20<sup>th</sup> March, rock enthusiasts started to congregate at the University at 7 a.m. What was expected to be a hot summer morning, turned out to be a very pleasant day with the clouds go deciding to surprise us. This was one of the rare Rock Walks where we had over a 100 people joining us, majority of whom were students from the University.

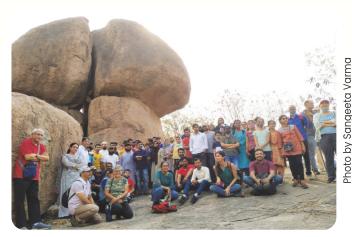
It was a first for many of the students who were making it to the rocks. Seeing our Members Vijay and Vasu climb the rocks with ease, quite a few students including few female students in their flowing burgas too felt encouraged to climb



Rock pose by students

and live the moment of having achieved a milestone! The shutterbugs went into a frenzy on seeing the reactions of the students.

Our first stop was at the site where stands a rock on its two feet. This rock is on top of a hill from where one can see the monstrous skyscrapers alongside the picturesque Fakhruddingutta Hill. After that we went to the very popular Pathar Dil rock formation. Much time was spent here in exploring and being in awe of the formation. The final trek was up a hill which took us close to the boundary of the campus towards the Khajaguda Lake. This was a slightly tough trek as there were many dry bushes and creepers that we had to



Group at Pathar Dil

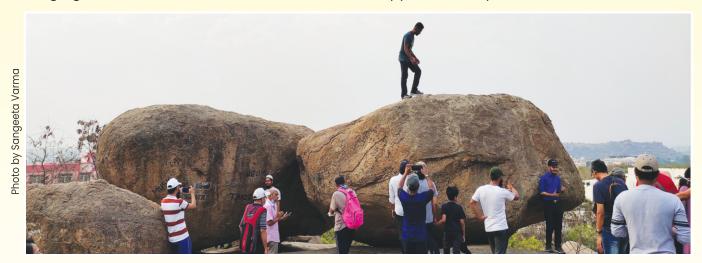
crouch under and the mud path was slippery. Nonetheless, a trek that had the students take umpteen selfies.

Courtesy the University, after a good 90 - 100 minutes trek, we were treated to a hearty and very tasty breakfast which was washed down sipping really hot and most welcome cuppa chai.

Post the walk and refreshments the rock walkers collected for three very interesting lectures and presentations by Geologists Prof. Praveen Raj Saxena and Prof. A.C. Narayana and Botanist Kobita Dass Kolli. Prof. Saxena outlined the connection of rocks to ground water and the role they play in recharging the earth.

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Prof. Narayana elaborated on the genesis of rocks, causes for the varying shapes and cracks, processes like weathering etc. by showcasing several photos highlighting the changing structures and types of rocks. Kobita shared many photos of a variety of flora and fauna that are particularly found in rocks and the finer details of their survival skills and propagating cycles in changing weather. All the three lectures were much appreciated by the audience.



We, from the Society to Save Rocks hope that the Rock Walk and these lectures sparked a desire in the minds of the young students to come forward and join our cause in protecting our natural heritage.

The Society expresses its heartfelt thanks to Vice Chancellor Prof. S. A. Hasan and Prof. Salma Farooqui, HOD, Centre for Deccan Studies, for collaborating with us and making this Rock Walk special and hugely successful.

- Sangeeta Varma

### 26<sup>th</sup> Anniversary goes virtual



26th January 2022 which happened to be the 26th Anniversary of the Society was marked by an evening of virtual Rock Hambandagi in typical Hyderabadi style with Sangeeta Varma as MC. 15 Nature lovers who truly hold the rocks close to their heart shared their fond memories of what the Rocks of Hyderabad meant to them – some of the septuagenarians recollected how they scrambled up hills on picnics and how the great granite formations are the first sign of approaching the familiar Telangana territory. Dotted with poetry, shayaris and fascinating environmental facts, all invitees were glued to the screen from start to finish!

Many heartfelt appreciations followed regarding the small but meaningful celebration.

To mark our anniversary the Society's online Rock Quiz was conducted in partnership with the Hyderabad Literary Festival (HLF) in January. Hearty congratulations to the winners

1. Sanjeev Varma

2. Zoe Harish

3. Sugandini Reddy

The State Art Gallery supported the Society's Photo Exhibition of the stunning Deccan Rocks by our Member Photographers during their anniversary week which coincided with ours. Our thanks to both the HLF Committee and the State Art Gallery.

Date	Place	Time / Meeting point	
Sunday, April 17, 2022	Rocks at Durgam Cheruvu	7:00 a.m. / Opp. Footwear Design and Development Institute, Off Dargah Road (Gachibowli Rd.), Raidurgam (Return approx. 11 a.m.)	
Sunday, May 15, 2022	Ghaar-e-Mubarak	7:00 a.m. / Taramati Baradari, Ibrahimbagh (Return approx. 11 a.m.)	
Sunday, June 19, 2022	Moula Ali	3:30 p.m. / Opp. St. Ann's School, White House, Tarnaka (Return approx. 6.30 p.m.)	

Rock Walks are conducted on the third Sunday of every month. Everybody is welcome. Walking shoes and long pants should be worn. Registration with GRB Pradeep at 9866752114.

**We welcome our new Members:** Padmaja and Anil Attota, Life (Couple) Prof. A.C. Narayana - Active (Single)

Managing Committee						
President:	Prof. Fatima Alikhan	9849 362 944	Padmini B. Patell	9912865299		
Vice President:	Aparajita Sinha	9849 655 363	Dr. Sudheer Bhan	8106072537		
Secretary:	Frauke Quader	9849 936 248	Dr. E. Sathya Prakash	9440057846		
			Amardeep Singh	9246150207		
Joint Secretary:	Sangeeta Varma	9849 044 624	Sajid Mehmood	9810528070		
Treasurer:	G.R.B. Pradeep	9866 752 114	B.P. Acharya, IAS(Retd)			

Active and Student Members are requested to pay the annual Membership Fees falling due on 1.4.2022. Please enquire at 04023552923 about your outstandings.

Membership Fee					
Class	Admission	Annual Subscription			
Active (Single)	₹ 100.00	₹ 500.00			
Active (Couple)	₹ 100.00	₹ 600.00			
Student (Under 18 Years)	₹ 100.00	₹ 200.00			
Life (Single)	₹ 3000.00				
Life (Couple)	₹ 5000.00				
Institution	₹ 10000.00	A SAME			
Corporate	₹ 50000.00	25 Years of Rock Conservation SOCIETY to SAVE ROCKS			

To initiate widening the reach of the Society, the following Sub Committees have been formed. Kindly WhatsApp your willingness to volunteer:

- 1. Rock Walks and Recces
- 2. Awareness programmes Educational and other Institutions
- 3. PR and Publicity
- 4. Geo Heritage and Scientific Survey
- 5. Government Outreach

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