

SOCIETY TO SAVE ROCKS

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HYDERABAD'S HERITAGE AT STAKE - HISTORIC ROCK HOUSE ERASED

By G. Shankar Narayan, Architect



Banjara Bhavan

It was no ordinary building, both historically and architecturally. The emphasis is on 'was' - Banjara Bhavan the home of Nawab Mehdi Nawaz Jung is but a pile of rubble now. This was the first house ever built in Banjara Hills, and it heralded the development of what is now an elite area of Hyderabad. A building that respected its natural setting and was built without destroying the rocky landscape – things which we often talk about these days, but rarely do. In losing this landmark I see a loss of imagination. Imagination to re-invent our urban scape. To grow the city without erasing its history. To invent new building forms and types that sit in harmony with the old.

Ostensibly, the Banjara Bhavan has succumbed to real estate pressures. The commercial value of the potential new built up area it could generate far exceeded the value of an old building. In this equation, there is no place for historical, societal or aesthetic value. These are fuzzy aspects that cannot be readily converted to monetary terms. It brings us back to the old debate on the obligations of the owner to preserve the structure for the larger benefit of society in lieu of his legitimate profits. Unless this equation is cracked satisfactorily, there will be no natural impulse to conserve.



A landmark destroyed

Coming specifically to the Banjara Bhavan case, the fairly extensive land area of 3000 sqm or more should have given more options for harmonious development. The ability to create more usable/saleable area without overwhelming the heritage structure should be the direction in which to go. There is also a case for the Heritage Conservation Committee (HCC) of HMDA which formally whets proposals, to be pro-active in such matters. Apart from just being an inventory of heritage structures, the HCC can prepare guideline designs showing the buildable/developable areas for every such structure. These can then be presented to the owners to preempt them from the extreme step of demolition.

This along with other pro-heritage measures can go a long way in redeeming the situation. For, in architecture unlike a painting or sculpture, a building lost can never be recreated. It is vain to blame just the building owners for the sorry state in heritage conservation. Imagination is what is lacking on all fronts – owners, professionals, civic authorities, statutory committees. Our city deserves better if it is to retain its soul for the future!

Shocked about the plans for a housing colony for retired Government officials in the Heritage Precinct Fakhruddingutta which was just declared a Rock & Adventure Park? Let us know your opinion.



*Kavita Deuskar : "Co-Existence"
3 x 4 ft, Acrylic on Canvas*

AGM HIGHLIGHTS

The sixteenth Annual General Body Meeting was held on August 26th - the agenda covered membership, awareness activities and financial statements. A decision was taken to raise funds through the sale of Art Works still in the possession of the Society. One of them is the painting "Co-Existence" by Hyderabad artist Kavita Deuskar. Please contact the Secretary if you are interested.

The highlight of the evening was a brief photo video titled "Story of the Society to Save Rocks" made for the Members, tracing the origin and achievements of the Society giving a gist of work done for the rock cause over the last 15 years, the various programmes held and the role of our members in their strong commitment to our rock cause. Copies of the DVD are on sale at the Society's office for Rs. 200/-.

**Reminder : Our Greeting Cards are available for the Festive Season.
Please check our website for different designs.**

PROTECT and INTEGRATE



Photo :
Sangeeta
Varma

In our now regular photo feature “Protect and Integrate” we show you that rocks need not be monumental to have an impact. Here, the small granite clusters add beautifully to the serenity of the waterspread.

Where is this tranquil “Pool of Peace”?

Send us your answer and win a prize. A lot will be drawn from the correct answers on October 20, 2011.

PRESS ECHO

The last months brought a wave of publicity. Papers and magazines reported extensively on the Society, the cause of rock preservation and the initiatives taken by the government:

Times of India, The Crest Edition, June 11, 2011: “Hyderabad, on the Rocks” - on the Society’s fight for the Deccan landscape

Harmony Magazine, August 2011: “Rock around the Clock” - on our “rocky mission”

Business Standard, 28.8.2011: “Walk The Rock” - on the rockwalk to Konda Madugu and the rock issue

India Today Magazine, Travel Plus, 13.9.2011: “Rock Walk, Hyderabad” - first item in “10 must-do walking tours in India”

The Hans India (Hyderabad Hans), 20.9.2011: “Chipping away Heritage Officially” - on rockwalk to Fakhruddingutta and the housing colony to come up in this Rock Park

Deccan Chronicle, 28.9.2011 : “Heritage Rock Precincts, Park Face Threat” - on Heritage Precinct Fakhruddingutta and the plans for a housing colony

New Indian Express, 2.10.2011: “The New Stone Age” - on Heritage rocks

Our full-day excursion by bus this year will take us to Yedupayala near Medak in November. This is a beautiful rocky area around a well-known Siva Rock Temple. The famous Pillow Rock and the Snoopy Rock are our favourites in the rocky landscape. The bus fare will be Rs. 500 per person. Bring lunch, drinking water and snacks. Enrolment and payment of fees at the office till November 15, 2011. For more details see below.

Rock Walks in October, November, December 2011

Date :	Place :	Time / Meeting Point:
Sunday October 16	Allabanda, Sitarambagh	3 pm. NMDC, Masab Tank
Sunday November, 20	Yedupayala, near Medak	7.00 a.m. at the parking lot of Vengal Rao Park Road No.1, Banjara Hills, BRING LUNCH etc. (See above)
Sunday December, 18	Bachupalli near Miyapur	2.00 pm. opp. ESI Hospital, Erragadda, or 2.30 p.m. at the Miyapur Cross Roads

Rock walks are conducted on the third Sunday of every month. They are announced in Channel 6, WOW Hyderabad, The Hindu, Times of India, fullhyd.com and of course on our website. Everybody is welcome. Sensible shoes, a cap, long pants and a water bottle are a must. Please enrol a minimum of 2 days in advance with Frauke Quader at Tel. 23552923 or with C.J. Rao at 98490-37240.

Managing Committee

President: Narendra Luther - 23399778
 Vice President: Aparajita Sinha - 9849655363
 Secretary: Frauke Quader - 9849936248
 Joint Secretary: Uma Maheshwari - 9866019402
 Treasurer: Sangeeta Varma - 9849044624

Members:

C.J. Rao - 9849037240
 Dr. Hina Gokhale - 9440893983
 Padmini B Patell - 9912865299
 Dr. Sudheer Bhan - 8106072537
 T.R. Subramaniam - 9849018199
 Ravi Setlem - 9866241768

Membership Fees

Class	Admission	Annual Subscription
Active (Single)	Rs. 100	Rs.200
(Couple)	Rs. 100	Rs.300
Student	Rs. 100	Rs.100
Life (Single)	Rs. 2,000 for Life	—
(Couple)	Rs. 3,000 for Life	—
Institution	Rs. 10,000	—
Corporate	Rs. 50,000	—