Documenting Heritage of Localities around Hyderabad
Issues and Challenges

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The story of irrevocable erasure and thoroughgoing transformation is part of the story of 'development' around Hyderabad as it is elsewhere. A case study of the transformation affecting the villages in and around the new Financial District of the Hi-tech city around Hyderabad was undertaken with the limited aim of focusing on the cultural loss due to these fast moving changes and the way the society thus impacted remembered its heritage. The reflections in this essay are about the unequal access to resources and facilities that the inner core of the settlement experiences, surrounded as it is by opulence of an unimaginable kind. While these conditions of materiality are important and deserve our attention, it is the tenacity of thoughts, emotions and social relations - all embedded in the cognitive space of people emanating out of these - that permit us to still access the cultural past of a community. This study has also prompted a questioning of the current methods of doing conventional historical research that is heavily dependent on the written word and the archive.

During the last three decades India has been going through a transition at a pace not been witnessed since Independence. Some of the economic changes affecting various aspects of life especially around urban centres is explicitly visible to ordinary citizens and in some cases have been well-documented.[1] This trend has led to significant transformations in Indian polity, society and economy, which is welcome in some ways, as it has helped improve the standard of living of its people. However, economic prosperity has not necessarily meant that there has been a change of mindset among those directly impacted by these changes. Concomitantly, issues around heritage conservation, changes in natural landscapes and, most importantly, the way identities have undergone change, has only recently begun to be discussed especially in those areas where the setting up of special economic zones has led to a total dissemination of peoples, landscapes and lifestyles. This story of irrevocable erasure and thoroughgoing transformation is part of the story of 'development' around Hyderabad as well. To take a close look at this change we took up the case study of the transformation affecting the villages in and around the new Financial District of the Hi-tech city on the outskirts of Hyderabad by documenting their heritage and placing on record their historical and cultural value embedded in them before these changes took place. The limited aim of the study was to focus on the cultural loss that these fast moving changes had led to and the way the society thus impacted remembered their heritage.

Conventionally, 'heritage', both natural and cultural, has been understood only as that which is tangible. If, on the other hand, we define heritage as something inherited, then we need, in addition, to also account for what is today commonly understood as intangible

heritage.[2] This means the practices, representations, narratives, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities recognize as being part of their cultural heritage.[3]

It is well-known that major religious monuments remain protected and so do burial grounds. However, the small shrines and local festivals find it difficult to survive. In our endeavor we particularly focused on the small shrines and ordinary homes and other vernacular structures that have withstood destruction so far. Using a self-reflexive mode, located as one was at the University of Hyderabad around which these villages were situated, we were able to capture and document a fast disappearing cultural heritage (archaeological, historical and living) for posterity by adopting a dialogic approach in involving employees of the University to be part of this enterprise. Moving away from a conventional approach, we involved them and other local communities and their narrations of the past and the present to inject their perspective into documenting their cultural heritage so that one could reconstruct and map out the socio-cultural and livelihood matrixes of these villages. In addition, we noted that there was a critical link between this disappearance and the destruction of the natural heritage; the latter, we noted, needed urgent steps to be taken by the State so that a clear future road-map to arrest it further indiscriminate erasure can be put in place.

Background

> **"**I was told by Iris Portal, the sister of Rab Butler, who had worked in Hyderabad before Independence[4].... (that) 'All the power was in the hands of the Muslim nobility. .... They would take us shooting, talking all the while about their trips to England or to Cannes and Paris, although in many ways ***Hyderabad was still living in the Middle Ages and the villages we would pass through were often desperately poor*'**."[5] [Emphasis added]

It would be impossible for us to specifically identify the villages Iris Portal refers to but it is the tenor of her reminisces that are significant for us to note here. Her stay in Hyderabad under the Nizam's rule [1930s] points to the state of village communities about roughly a hundred years ago in the region around the city of Hyderabad. For instance, Vikarabad, surrounded by the Anantgiri Hills was, and continued to be till the 1960s, a destination for Hyderabadis to indulge in their favorite pass times, including hunting. That the settlements under our present study were also part of the immediate rural hinterland of the city, *enroute* to Vikarabad, it is suggestive that these too were "desperately poor". We begin with this statement as it brings to the fore the complex relationship between power of the state, its economic well-being and the social status of communities.

A hundred years later the hitherto 'rural' hinterland around the city of Hyderabad has been transformed beyond its classification as even 'rurban'. State initiative and foreign capital has been injected to create an entire Metropolitan entity around it named 'Cyberabad' (Hyderabad and Secundrabad being the well-known twin cities earlier). This has been at the social and cultural cost of physical displacement, social upheaval and intangible loss that has still not been possible for the communities thus affected to grapple with. In visible terms the material subsistence level of some communities has improved but the deeper questions remain of what this has done to issues around continuing inequality, new identity formations, social relations within the community and with the new entrants that have come to inhabit these areas and, most importantly, from our perspective, to their collective heritage.

After the massive project of the Bharat Heavy Electrical Limited (BHEL), a Government of India undertaking, as the second major Central Government initiative in this region, the University of Hyderabad moved to its present lush campus in 1977 and the only modern built-in structures were located within the University campus that was circumscribed by a wall built of bricks that had been made out of rocks that lay here from times immemorial. These rocks have been part of the famous granite formations of 'molten magma'[6] that formed the Deccan Plateau about 2500 million years ago. Government amenities and infrastructure were next to invisible, and settlements of villages along the old Bombay Highway were the only signs of human habitation in the vicinity of the campus. The two major industrial areas were the BHEL, between Lingampally village and Patancheru and the other was around the village of Hafizpet. Both Hafizpet and Lingampally had railway stations. Today, it is with difficulty that one can spot the old settlements. Some of them have been totally erased with the fast pace of the transformation of the old 'Gacchibowli', a dry barren village of yesteryears, to what is now proudly proclaimed as the "Financial District", that guides travelers along the newly constructed Outer Ring Road. However, few landmarks from the old settlements exist, albeit in a transformed form. It is in these spaces that the memory of the old lives on in the minds of the people who today inhabit some of the now urbanized villages. The residents of these villages are some of the employees of the educational and other institutions that have come up in recent years.

It is against this background that we began, in 2012, a project[7] to document the tangible and intangible heritage around settlements between Dargah and Patancheru began. The villages visited during various phases of our work were Gacchibowli, Gopanpally, Hafizpet, Khajaguda, Kothaguda, Lingampally, Masjid Banda, Nallagandla, Nanakaramguda,

Pantancheru, Raidurgam/Dargah and Tellapur. All these were located around the University of Hyderabad and the Gacchibowli area.[8]

Sources and Methods

Empirical work was done to document archaeological data and historical vestiges in terms of extant monuments, ordinary houses and the like alongside documenting heritage that was intangible so that the social and cultural aspects of life could also be reflected upon through collecting oral narratives. All this had to be done at the micro-level. In the case of historical sources it must be stated at the outset that we had to contend with only fragments of evidence while in the case of oral sources, one had to be forewarned of exaggerations and perceptions rooted only in personal memory. Still, our intention to weave a historical imagery of these localities was firmly linked to the tenacious ways with which communities preserved, changed and renewed themselves to create a definitive cognitive space for recollecting their past and link it to the present.

In methodological terms, we drew on Beverley Kingston's insights,[9] Carlo Ginzburg's work,[10] the Annales School[11] and the work of Natalie Zemon Davis[12] to prepare our templates for data collection. In addition, we emphasized on using digital resources while at the same time, being aware and warned of the dangers of mere information replication without laying bare the various methodological parameters of documenting ancient knowledge.[13] Masks of new identities hide the persistence of old values, cultures and thought processes that demanded our attention using new methodologies. The conventional historical method of looking at the past to find the absolute truth had to give way to more flexible ways of looking at narrative traditions rooted in memory. The two apparently occupied autonomous domains but the reality of social change was necessarily embroiled in taking cognizance of deeper sensibilities beyond the search of pure 'facts' of the past.

Historiography and Documentation

Attempts to document began with a basic understanding that the usual archaeological and archival sources would provide us enough data that we could build upon. It was a disappointment that no such official source material could be accessed. Neither archaeological reports, nor official Gazetteers[14] reported on these settlements in any significant way. The monumental Syed Ali Asgar Bilgrami's study on *Landmarks of the Deccan* (1927) meant to be *A Comprehensive Guide to the Archaeological Remains of the City and Suburbs of Hyderabad*, as its subtitle suggested, revealed nothing on these

settlements extending its scope only to documenting major monuments of the Qutub Shahi period in what the author called the 'suburbs' of Hyderabad. A few monuments in the Toli Chowki, Shaikpet and Dargah areas were found listed in this work. Based on oral memory, Lalita Gir etched out her reminiscences of living in the Shaikpet and Toli Chowki areas in the 1950-1960s, which she defined as still very rural and marked by huge areas of natural landscape.[15] Fragmentary pieces of information[16] were collected from information printed or narrated on the two Sri Ranganath Swamy temples at Nanakaramguda and Gopanpalli[17] that were both sites of huge yearly gatherings (*yatras*) and are considered to be at least 400 year old monuments. Similarly, the Haji Mastan Dargah at Masjid Banda and the Fakkhruddhin Gutta Dargha at Khajaguda become the focal point of the communities at the time of their respective annual *urs*.

Only two of the places under study provided immense historical data – at Patancheru[18] in the form of sculptural evidence that went back to the Chalukyan times, while at Dargah, firmly datable historical monuments went back to the Qutub Shahi period. Other than these striking historical remains, most of the other villages under study revealed data on small shrines, burial areas and locally significant structures. Except on the campus of the University of Hyderabad, no systematic excavations[19] had been conducted in these villages by the various Government Departments of Archaeology.[20] The University of Hyderabad excavations reported on megalithic remains that are typical of an iron age (roughly beginning around the mid-first millennium BCE) all over Peninsular India.

It was hoped that the Hyderabad Urban Development Authority that was active in the late 1990s would have incorporated some of the old structures between Patancheru and Dargah. On studying the G.O.[21] notifying these heritage buildings and precincts it was noticed that most of the 137 buildings notified pertained to the major architectural monuments of the Qutub Shahi period in the areas around Mehedipatnam, Golconda, Shaikpet, Dargah and Patancheru and a few on the Himayat Sagar Road, Banjara Hills and Jubilee Hills.[22] It is interesting, however, that the Precincts (natural rock formations) that were notified[23] included two important ones that pertained immediately to the hinterland of the village settlements under study. The first includes the 'Rock formations on hillocks around Durgam Cheruvu' situated behind Jubilee Hills and the second are those that cover the Raidurg and Madhapur localities and identified as Survey Nos. 44, 46, 63, 64 and 83. Another, much closer to the focus area of study was what is called the 'Rock Park' that refers to the Hillock behind Dargah Hussain Shah Wali Cheruvu accessible from the Old Bombay Road and Khajaguda Road in Ranga Reddy District identified as Survey No. 246 of the

Manikonda Jagir. And finally, the most significant one and actually located in a part of the University of Hyderabad is what is called the "Mushroom Rock" identified as Survey No. 25 in Gachibowli, Serilingampalli Mandal, Ranga Reddy District. The government's intention in issuing this G.O. was to put into effect the Expert Committee's recommendations on 'Heritage Conservation' so that "Heritage Buildings, Precincts, areas, Artefacts, Structures of Historical, Aesthetical, Architectural or Cultural value" could be conserved as per regulation 13 of the HUDA's zoning regulations.[24] It would not be out of place here to also mention that significant water bodies in many of these villages had also been listed as those that have to be saved, namely, Patancheru Cheruvu, Nanakaramguda Kunta, Nalagandla Cheruvu, Manikonda Jagir Kunta, Gopi Cheruvu in Lingampally, Nalla Cheruvu in Tellapur among others.[25]

Given the absence of smaller structures from not only the heritage lists but also an absence of any recorded accounts of the history of these villages, the challenge before us was to retrieve a past in terms of its continuity and its reinvention in different ways. Against the background of this historiographical and archaeological absence, in many ways our endeavor became the first to begin to write a sort of 'History' of these 'rural' settlements. Each was couched in its own sense of the past, central to their survival and identity but only articulated through their seasonal festivals and rites of passage and their memory of family or village histories. The close relationship with nature was evident in the initial survey of the landscape that we did. This has also been reported by one of the *Newsletters of the Society to Save Rocks*, that the communities had safely guarded the rocks by making most of their shrines deep inside the rocks or, at their base. For generations then these natural formations have remained protected. For instance, in the case of Gopanpally, the old Ranganath Swamy temple was located in a niche under huge boulders, almost like a cave and surrounded on all sides by sheet rock and boulders. We found another temple under a natural Rock on the Fakhruddin Gutta hill at Khajaguda called the Padmanabha Swamy Temple. Similarly, all the small shrines visited even after the Emaar properties have taken away the land around the Nanakaramguda village, are at the base of rocks and structures have been built using the rocky backdrop. Apart from this visible connection between human urge for the sacred and the necessity to protect the natural environment, our journey with the inhabitants through the years (between 2012-13 and 2014-2016) through the oral narratives, festival celebrations and earlier means of livelihood, revealed how dependent the people were on their environment. To document the cognitive space of these villages began based on memory and orality but, very much within the gambit of the current material existence of these communities.

Observations and Results
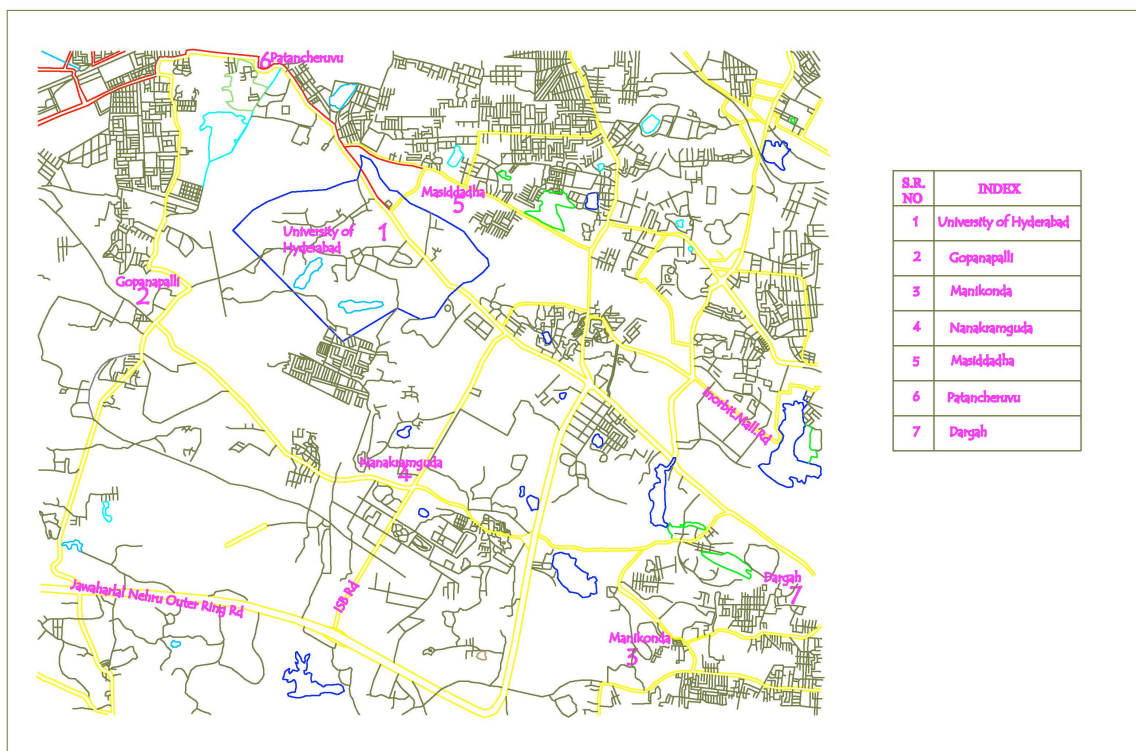
It was observed that the original character of the villages was only evident in the way communities here, by and large, still continued to live, in some cases, in their tile roofed houses or huts and the elderly people still continued to practice their old occupations, as farmers, grazers of goat, cattle and buffaloes, toddy tappers, dhobis, barbers, potters, snake catchers and so on. Their houses, religious establishments, small shrines, water bodies and pathways were those that were closely related to the everyday life and cultural practices.

At the first instance, to get a glimpse of the physical layout of these erstwhile villages **revenue maps** were accessed from the Revenue Department of the State. Only those of Nanakaramguda, Gopanpally, Kothaguda, Raidurgam Khajaguda and Tellapur could be procured and these were digitized to get the old historical boundaries of these villages and their lands as the basis for this study.

Next, **historical religious monuments**, both big and small, of all faiths practiced were documented at Gopanpally, Nallagandla, Masheed Banda, Hafizpet, Kothaguda, Gacchi Bowli, Khajaguda, Dargah, Patancheru, Lingampally and Tellapur. For Nanakaramguda a

documentary film has been made to highlight the old and the new in terms of how it was perceived by the residents of this village. At all these places local shrines of folk importance, Hindu temples and Muslim shrines were photographically recorded.

At all of the above villages considerable material on **vernacular structures** like a house using rock structures, extant old tiled homes, wherever available, burial areas, roads, markets and old craft professions were studied and documented. Most significant, was the documentation of the boundary marking Khajaguda which captured for us the co-existence of an old natural landscape alongside very old religious monuments on a hill called Fakkrudingutta – the *dargah* of Baba Fakkrudin and the Padmanaswamy temple. Another interesting aspect was the collection of the oldest historical material in this area at Patancheru, some of which is now housed on the ICRISAT campus. Here, the sculptural evidence can be dated back to the 6th-7th CE reminding us of stylistic traditions of the Chalukyan times. Patancheru, as the suffix to its name reveals has been a market town since very early times.

The **natural and historical heritage** that is well protected on University of Hyderabad Campus was also photographed and documented. As noted above it is significant that the University of Hyderabad Campus was home to the first Megalith people going back to the early centuries BCE. The burials here have been excavated under the aegis of the State Archaeology Department and the Archaeological Survey of India. At all the above places existing **natural landscape, rock formations, natural water bodies** (*cheruvus*) were documented and their condition recorded.

Finally, at Nanakaramguda, Gopanpally, Nallagandla, Dargah, Khajaguda Masjid Banda, Lingampally and Tellapur some **oral histories** were collected giving us critical insights into the social configuration of these two villages, the social memory of the different communities about the formation and history of their village and their socio-political and economic structure. Since the Nizam's times Tellapur and Lingampally were in the past more densely populated than the others since they were substantial agricultural villages and paid significant revenue to the State.

As an initial endeavor[26] for our survey of the area we have done a pictorial documentation to get an overview of heritage symbols and the changes that has taken place in these villages. Based on this we made some perfunctory observations. In the immediate backyard of the University of Hyderabad there was the erstwhile village of Gopanpalli and with its lively Lambada Thanda. Here we needed to link the relationship that it had with the contiguous agrarian settlement of Tellapur and the market town of Lingampally that

originally must have been an important sedentary community along an important trade route leading to the major town of this sub-region, namely, Pattancheru. The latter's location on the old Bombay Highway, to the west of Hyderabad city, enabled us to unravel the history of this ancient *pattana* (town), originally on the banks of a natural *cheruvu* (lake). Its known history went back to at least the 5th century CE. Along with highlighting its antiquity, we built on the fragments of historical evidence still available to weave a long term history of the region. Opposite the main entrance to the University of Hyderabad was the old pastoral settlement of Masjid Banda, which, we were told was a transitory settlement in earlier times. Its existence had to be expanded upon in terms of its linkages to the villages of Kondapur and Kothaguda that were both revenue settlements. On the other side of the Outer Ring Road, bifurcated by new roadways, the settlements of Khajaguda and Nanakaramguda enabled us to develop a historical and cultural mapping of a network of communities in the erstwhile Manikonda Zamindari. In all these villages we (a) documented the highly deteriorated 16th century religious structures and (b) investigated the transformations of older (inter and intra) caste and religious identities. What is now called the Hi-tech City region was, in medieval times, a major destination for the shrine of Hussaini Shah Wali, popularly known as the Dargah that came up around the village of Raidurgam. Its documentation enabled us not only to highlight its Islamic heritage but established for us the typical layout of an old settlement with its various housing structures, shops and old crafts that still persisted. It unraveled for us the tenacity of how communities preserve and renew themselves.

During the course of our field work, there was the formation of the new State of Telangana. We noted that the **traditional festivals**[27] of Bonalu and Bathukamma now began to be celebrated with a new sense of vigor to establish a Telangana identity. The way these festivals were celebrated were tracked by us. The Bonalu festivities were recorded at Raidurgam/Dargah, Kothaguda and Gacchibowli and the Bathukamma festivities as played out at Masjid Banda, Kothaguda, Khajaguda, NITHMN (Gacchibowli), and Raidurgam/Dargah were video-graphed and recorded. At Kothaguda the unusual tenacity of the villagers to continue their tradition was visible in that they brought tankers of water to fill the dry bed of their local lake, the Narela Kunta so that they could complete their play of Bathukamma. At Masjid Banda the making of the Bathukamma was observed in detail and interestingly, it was noted that the marginalized communities had their own celebrations, distinct from the others in the village. At Khajaguda the Bathkamma celebrations happened alongside the Dussera festivities of the burning of Ravana. The Ramanavami celebrations as

they happened at Lakshmanbagh/Rambagh in Raidurgam were also video-graphed. At Nanakaramguda Ramanavmi celebrations were confined to select communities of traders and the upper castes. Finally, the Urs celebrations at the renowned Hussain Shah Wali Dargah were recorded. The same was done for the Baba Fakhruddin Urs on the Khajaguda hill. Both these celebrations brought to light the social nature of the participation of different communities. It also revealed that economically small-time shop and stall owners temporarily earned revenues to make their livelihood. Elements of local culture, dress and every-day practices were apparent in the way people thronged to these sites. A limited access to the performance of marriage and pre-marriage rituals was documented at Gopanpally and Tellapur respectively.

In retrieving "memory [which] is the core of **oral history** from which meaning can be extracted and preserved",[28] we addressed the social and cultural narratives that reflected on a sense of belonging while, carefully also telling us about 'Otherness'. In this cognitive space the extent to which the continuity with the past was possible given the fast changing environment, did impact the way these narratives emerged before us. By confining ourselves to specific issues one has tried to avoid the pitfall of exaggerated claims to hoary antiquity and an unabashed admiration for the past. In this sense we have drawn on Nicole Boivin's[29] understanding of material culture as a distinct way of life that can also be made connectable to thoughts, emotions and social relations.

Nanakaramguda, which is today the heart of the Financial District and home to many multinational companies, was in the past a flourishing agricultural village of the Manikonda Zamindari. However, it was interesting to note here that 50% of its population were 'outsiders', namely, Lodha Khatris that had come here during the period of the Nizams to act as security guards and they still held on to the customs and traditions of Uttar Pradesh from where they had originally come. The laboring castes of the village had migrated from the contiguous village of Puppulguda in search of work in the agricultural fields of the Reddy landlords who constituted 25% of the population. The oral narratives[30] of the other communities that formed the other 25% of the inhabitants told us about the vagaries of 'development' and how it impacted them being the service providers to the village as potters, barbers, washer-men, leather workers, toddy tappers and so on. Interestingly, some like the washer-men or dhobis benefitted financially with more households to work for, while others like the toddy tapper found it difficult to compete with the new liquor shops. At **Gopanpally,** the ethnographic study[31] of the village enabled us to get an idea of its settlement pattern

which could be historically constructed. It was noted that there was a migration history of Lambadas to the village which marked out one area. Its two parts were socially and culturally distinct. There was almost a near total disappearance of traditional resources and communal rights over natural water bodies in this village. In fact, clearly the 'developmental' activities around it in terms of private estates and high rise buildings coming up had impacted it in significant ways so much so that one of roads leading to a new apartment complex was called the Aliens Road!

At **Raidurgam and Dargah** the material culture was still intact. It was noted that there was clear demarcations of the streets and areas that the communities inhabited. It was noted that some Muslim families were closely connected to the Dargah established here while others had worked in the *watan jagirs* on traditional occupations. The Venkateswara temple defined the landscape of the original Raidurgam village and a number of people interviewed narrated their long term association with traditional occupations. However, both these settlements had organic linkages with each other since a very long time. These were not only of a spatial and economic nature but had even socio-cultural implications that were reflected in the relationships between and within the Hindu and Muslim communities. Both the Hindu and Muslim communities visited the shrines and tombs of saints as well as participated in each other's festivals. As in the case of other villages the urban sprawl and corporatization of the region has subsumed and transformed some of the traditional practices. At **Masjid Banda** it was noted that there was a mix of Muslim and Yadav population and their areas of habitation too were marked out separately. Most of the history of this village was around the shifting of the original settlement from around the Hanuman temple to the area now dominated by the old Mosque and Shivalyam. Quite a few of the traditional occupations, largely pertaining to cattle rearing, have been given up as their resource base no longer exists around this village. Some of the prominent waterbodies like the village lake (*cheruvu*), deep wells (*bavi*) that dotted this area have nearly disappeared or depleted. Even if some of them exist they are completely polluted and unfit for human or animal consumption. The number of the original dwellers has substantially come down and many outsiders dominate the retail economy of this village. In fact, today beginning with this village up to Hafizpet, via Kothaguda and Kondapur, new shopping complexes and planned housing complexes have mushroomed, which has led to house rents becoming exorbitant in this erstwhile pastoral and transient settlment.

Tellapur was a traditional an agricultural settlement of about 100 households with vatandari / jajmani (patron / client) system intact. It was predominantly a Hindu multi-caste village substantially inhabited by artisanal and service caste households belonging to SC and OBC castes. According to some of the informants its size grew as a result of a migration of people to this village after the digging of the now well-known Gandipeta Cheruvu. Some of the older informants further informed us that it was a forest (*vanam*) village developed under the aegis of a Golkonda Nawab, one of the Mansabdars of the Nizam, who along with his soldiers used to come to this area for hunting wild animals. During his reign a Masjid was built and a few Muslim households originally from the Osman Sagar area came to settle here. After some years, Yadavs (shepherds) from the nearby villages used to visit this village area for grazing their livestock. Still later, the other caste people, including the agricultural castes like the Reddys migrated and settled here. Tellapur has some of the oldest temples of local deities and they, according to the informants, could be about 300 years old. Today Tellapur as well as the contiguous Nallagandla village have become the rich hunting grounds for property dealers who have been constructing huge apartment complexes and villas here to house those who work in the multinational companies at Gachibowli and Nanakaramguda and elsewhere in this region.

Lingampally during the 19th century was also under a Golkonda Nawab and this had a significant impact on the number of Muslim households that came to settle here. The village lands were later transferred to Patels, Patwaris and Karanams, who predominantly belonged to the Reddy and other upper castes. The original village consisted of about 140 households and within the village the houses were laid out on the caste lines. The livelihood of most of the villagers here revolved around paddy, millet and pulses cultivation. Besides agriculture, some families depended on cultivation of vegetables, horticulture, and livestock rearing, and fishing in the water bodies. This village was once an important commercial hub to the surrounding villages. The village was well known for its Friday market (*Santha*). According to some of the informants, about 25 village traders used to come to the village for the Friday market and the core market yard was in front of the *Tulja Bhavani* Temple.

Conclusion

Broad trends that were clearly discernible at these villages were linked to the changes that have taken place over the last one hundred years or so. These trends point to some kind of coincidence with the timelines of political and other changes that have taken place during

the same period in the region as a whole. Political upheavals during the mid-20th century with the rise of independent India did not immediately change the lifestyles of the people expect in terms of the power structure under which some of these villages paid their taxes. As mentioned above we were able to collect old revenue maps of the 1960s to plot the various natural bodies that were then visible and documented as well as the revenue areas of the region as a whole. Social changes only began to happen in the late 1980s when old caste barriers were questioned by the steps the new State took to introduce constitutional rights of the marginalized communities.

However, the most significant changes happened when policy changes consciously driven by State initiative towards the end of the 20th century to carve out special economic zones in many of the villages under study impacted the social, economic and physical landscape affecting the communities living in these villages. This led to demographic changes on a large scale due to pull and push factors. Many of these villages had nurtured many backward and deprived communities. Their cultural moorings have been mutilated affecting their social fabric and livelihoods, forcing them to migrate to other places in search of eking livelihoods. Some of them have been absorbed as the service providers for the new IT companies that have mushroomed in and around these villages. Furthermore, with the high intensity of building activity the property dealers have had a heyday and many of the local residents also provided the labour force for these endeavours. With new professional entrants to these places, the real estate and builders lobby, who have scant respect to the social, cultural and physical landscapes, unconsciously got a new lease of life as housing and offices spaces for these clients had to be made at break neck speed.

All these activities have posed a serious **threat to the heritage, ecology and environment**, besides bringing in a particular 'modern' social temperament among the largely uneducated local populace. This of course had a ripple effect in terms of the number of schools that came up in this area as the realization soon dawned that basic education would provide the next generation the fruits of employment and economic well-being that the earlier generation had been deprived of. The pollution of water bodies and depleting ground water resources has also negatively affected the village communities. Still we find some of the traditional systems are in place to maintain the shrines and temples with some changes in their organization. This is a significant factor in the preservation of some old monuments. Its not merely the destruction of old monuments but critically also the damaging of the old Deccan landscapes that had nurtured a life suitable for these particular environmental conditions, that is at the brink of extinction.

The State and policy makers have to urgently take steps in some directions like the preservation and rejuvenation of old lakes, the protection of rock formations, which protect underground water resources and the like.

Our journey through these villages has only partially been able to capture glimpses of the past. Economic levels of subsistence have always needed improvements, to the way the social and religious landscape of these settlements has historically evolved. Generally, it is assumed and imagined and, often feared, that the present fast track changes would destroy the past totally. But if this happens so will the identity of people be gone forever. However, our conversations with the inhabitants have revealed that this is something that they do not wish to let go off. At the end of the first year of our documentation at Nanakramguda in 2013, the *Hindu* carried a short piece on this village entitled "Hamlet unchanged: Welcome to Nanakramguda". Sandeep Kumar the reporter writes:

> Despite the real estate boom and influx of corporate structures, life in this village, hardly 4 km from Tolichowki, *is much the same. Residents still wake up at the crack of dawn and streets turn deserted at dusk*, except for the occasional cab and motorcyclist passing by. *People here still lead life at their own terms*, of course sans proper infrastructure.[32] [Emphasis added]

The reflections in this essay are about the unequal access to resources and facilities that the inner core of the settlement has whereas it is surrounded by opulence of an unimaginable kind. While these conditions of materiality are important and deserve our attention, it is the tenacity of thoughts, emotions and social relations – all embedded in the cognitive space of people emanating out of these, that permit us to still access the cultural past of a community. We collect the voices of 'history' and make these voices preserve the community's past in ways that enriches our understanding of the present. We began by stating that when looking at the past of a small locality the absence of the written word in the form of texts impeded that retrieval. However, this study enabled me to question my own methods of doing conventional historical research that is heavily dependent on the written word and the archive. Through the cognitive space of orality and memory the social and cultural landscape of the locality was retrieved along with its flexible notions of space and time to understand long term historical perceptions. Erasure has its place but not for people who understand their past, not in an alien land of the past, but as a living present that is firmly sustained through sensibilities and cognition that live on in the intangible realm**.**

Notes

[1] For instance, Vandana Vasudevan *Urban Villager, Life in an Indian Satellite Town*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2013

[2] Kirti Kapur, Department of Art, Culture and Language: An Analysis, Department of the National Capital Territory, Centre for Civil Society, New Delhi, 2004, p. 50.
See also K. Venkatsubramanian, *Report of the Steering Committee for Art and Culture, for the Formulation of the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007),* Planning Commission, Government of India, New Delhi, 2001, p. 5

[3] As defined by the UNESCO at http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00002 accessed February 2, 2012

[4] This refers to the period of the 1930's. William Dalrymple, 'Restoring Heritage', *Seminar*, *The Monthly Symposium*, #585, May 2008, p. 43.

[5] Ibid., pp. 43-44

[6] *Society of Save Rocks*, Hyderabad website http://www.saverocks.org/Geology.html accessed January 31,2012

[7] I acknowledge the funding made available to me under the UGC University of Potential for Excellence – Phase II Scheme at the University of Hyderabad that enabled me to do field-work for this project between 2012-2013 and 2014-2016.

[8] Google map at https://www.google.co.in/maps/place/Gachibowli,+Hyderabad,+Telangana/

[9] Beverley Kingston, 'The Use and Function of Local History', in *Locating Australia's Past, A Practical Guide to Writing Local History*, ed., The Local History Co-ordination Project, Kensington, University of New South Wales Press, 1988, p. 8.

[10] Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms, The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980

[11] Fernand Braudel, (Trans. Sarah Mathews), *On History*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1980

[12] Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1983

[13] Aloka Parasher-Sen, 'The Making of Digital Historical Atlas' *The International Journal of Technology, Knowledge and Society,* Vol. 2, No. 4, 2006, pp. 91-98

[14] Those for the Medak and Ranga Reddy districts were consulted but little or no information on the villages under study around the University of Hyderabad could be accessed.

[15] Lalita Gir, 'Memories of Sheikhpet and Tolichowki in the early 1960's, in V. K. Bawa (ed.), *Huda-Intach Heritage Annual*, 2000, p. 20

[16] A printed brochure in Hindi with photos printed by the Shri Ranganath Mandir, Rangabag Trust, for Nanakramguda for instance, acted as a source of information

[17] Primarily based on oral conversations with caretakers of the shrine.

[18] Aloka Parasher Sen (with R. Himabindu), 'Understanding Local History: Archaeological Remains at Patancheru', *Journal of Deccan Studie*s, Vol. IV, No. 2, July-December 2006, pp. 5-27.

[19] P. Chenna Reddy Director of the former Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Andhra Pradesh informed reporters about megalithic remains at the Kothaguda Botanical Gardens as reported in 'Hyderabad's History could date back to 500 BC', *Thaindian News*, 10. 09.2008, pp. 1-3 accessed online on 12.11.20015

[20] Commissioner , Archaeology and Museums, Government of Andhra Pradesh, 'Excavations at a Megalithic Burial Site – a Menhir at Lingampalli, RR District, AP, in V. K. Bawa (ed.), *Huda-Intach Heritage Annual*, 2001, pp. 46-47; K.P. Rao, 'Gacchi Bowli: A Preliminary Report', *Puratattva* Bulletin of the Indian Archaeology Society, No. 40, 2010, pp. 102-111.

[21] *Hyderabad Urban Development Authority*, 'March 1998 List of Heritage Buildings and Heritage Precincts (Rocks) in Hyderabad City' Vide G.O. Ms. No. 102 M.A. dated 23rd March 1998, pp. 1-23.

[22] Ibid, pp. 3-8.

[23] Ibid, Annexure II, p. 9.

[24] Ibid, p. 1

[25] Hyderabad Urban Development Authority, Notification –Save Lakes for a Better Future' No. 3195/PR/H/2000 dated 04-05-2000 reproduced in V.K. Bawa (ed.), *Huda-Intach Heritage Annual*, 2000, pp. 58-59

[26] 'Archiving Heritage – From Dargah to Patancheru (Documentation of Tangible and Intangible Heritage in the Environs of the University of Hyderabad' in Dakkan Dak, *Journal of Deccan Studies,* Vol. XIV, No. 2, July-December 2016, pp.129-162

[27] Videos of the celebration of many of these festivals at select villages have been made for record.

[28] Donald Ritche*, Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2003, p. 19

[29] Nicole Boivin, *Material Cultures, Material Minds: The Impact of Things on Human Thought, Society and Evolution*, Cambridge University Press, 2010

[30] Based on interviews conducted to make a Documentary Film on village of Nanakaramguda.

[31] At select villages noted here, formal interview using the anthropological method with set Interview Log Sheets were conducted. The narrative here is based on these interviews conducted among the inhabitants of these villages.

[32] *The Hindu, Hyderabad edition, April 2. 2013* Online accessed on May 13, 2013 at http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Hyderabad/hamlet-unchanged-welcome-to-nanakramguda/article4573961.ece