

TRAVEL LUST

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JAMSHEDPUR, INDIA'S PREMIER STEEL CITY, ALSO A TOURIST ATTRACTION

Jamshedpur, Jharkhand, is the first and premier Steel City of India. It is also the city where I had most of my schooling at Loyola School, then considered among the TOPMOST SCHOOLS IN THE COUNTRY. Later I worked In Tata Motors for 30 years / hence the city is close to my heart and I am taking the liberty of putting it on the first page of the first issue of our online magazine.



The Jubilee Park, Jamshedpur, lit up for Founder's Day

Another reason to highlight it at this time is that the birth anniversary of Jamsetji Tata, founder of the TATA group, falls on 3rd March, and the city, specially the Jubilee Park is decorated like a queen.

Though Jamshedpur is known as an industrial city it has beautiful surroundings: the Dimna lake and the Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary attract many tourists each year.

My colleague from the Loyola School batch of 1961, who now resides in Jamshedpur, has kindly agreed to give his impressions. So over to Davinder Singh



Abbas Tyabji, Editor

Jamshedpur was a township that started getting built around 1911, when construction of the first Steel Plant of the Country started.

Today Jamshedpur is one of the cleanest and best cities in the Country to reside in. The water coming out of taps in the command area of the City is so pure, that it does not require to be purified.

The infrastructure of the city is PAR EXCELLENCE and to my mind, no other City in the Country comes even close.



A general view of Jamshedpur, one of the cleanest cities in India



Factory of Tata Steel, Jamshedpur largest unit in the Steel City

It has beautiful recreational facilities like the JRD SPORTS COMPLEX, many Clubstwo of which Beldih and Golmuri have their own, state of the art , golf courses, which also end up having annual prestigious golf Tournaments.

All in all, having been born in the City and a Second Generation resident here, and having worked for Tata Steel I consider myself extremely fortunate.

Amongst my many travels abroad, I still find Jamshedpur, to be better / superior to many places abroad, in very many aspects.

Assembly line of Tata Motors (credit:Alamy)

Apart from Tisco/Tata Steel the other major Companies and Industries in Town are, TATA Motors, erstwhile Telco, The Tinplate Company of India, Indian Steel and Wire Products, Cable Company, The Indian Tube Company, Tata Robbins Fraser and then a whole host of ancillaries in Adityapur Industrial Area. All the larger entities have their townships.

I would not want to live anywhere else.





The golf courses in Jamshedpur are of the highest standards and National Championships are held here

(pics on this page by Davinder Singh)

Davinder Singh, left, an avid golfer, seen with his golfing colleagues



Text by Davinder Singh, who did Engineering from Youngston University, USA and then worked in Tata Steel. He is a regular golfer and has also travelled quite a lot. He is a second generation employee of Tata Steel, so he decided to write about the City.



Dimna lake and Dalma Wildlife sanctuary on the outskirts of the Steel City are among its tourist attractions



ROYAL OPERA HOUSE - A LANDMARK OF OMAN



Night views of Royal Opera House,

Text and some pictures by Raffat Nayyar, a passionate photographer with years of experience capturing moments, mostly in Oman where she has spent most of her life and travelled extensively. Over the years, her work has been recognized through numerous photography awards and exhibitions, including the Bengal photography exhibition where she was selected to showcase her work.

Oman takes great pride in preserving its unique culture and traditions, which are evident in the country's architecture and numerous stunning mosques across the country.

There is much to discover in Muscat, the capital city of Oman. Specifically, in this edition, I would like to present to you The Royal Opera House.

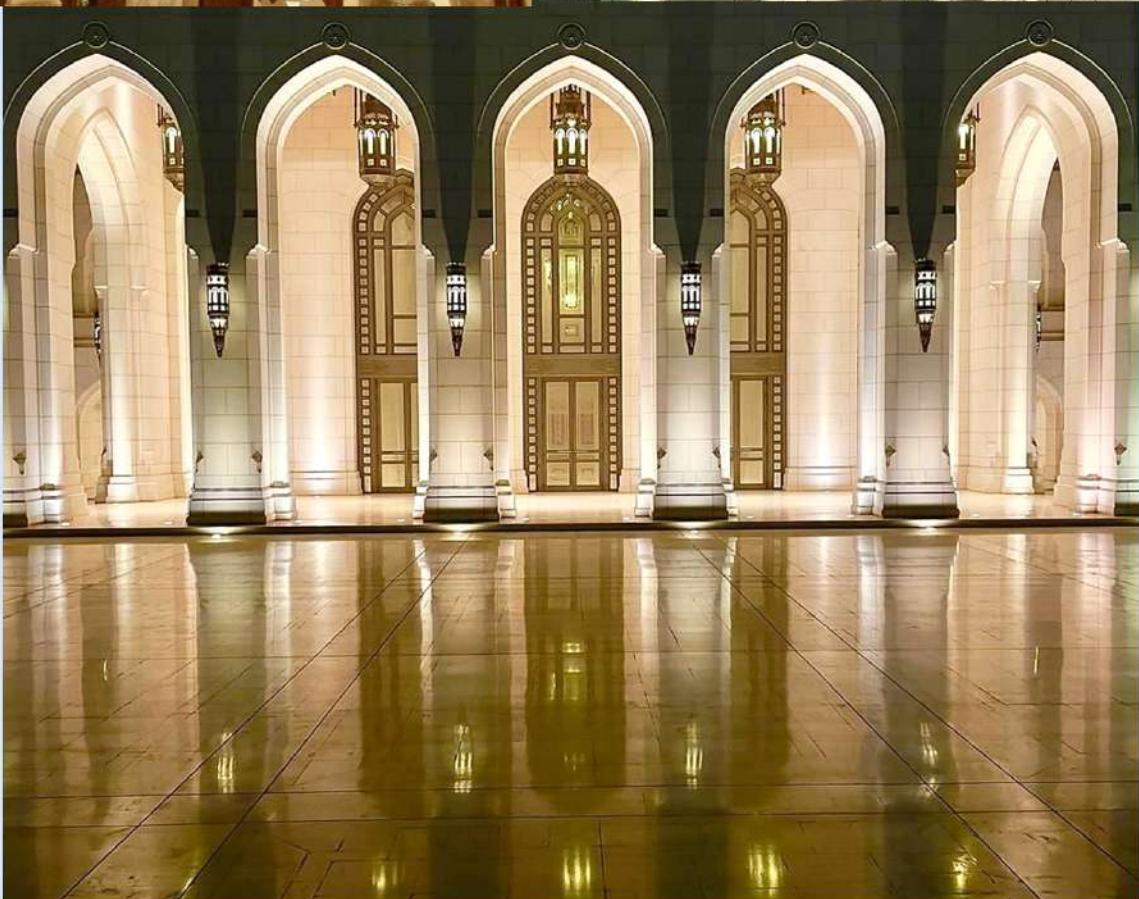
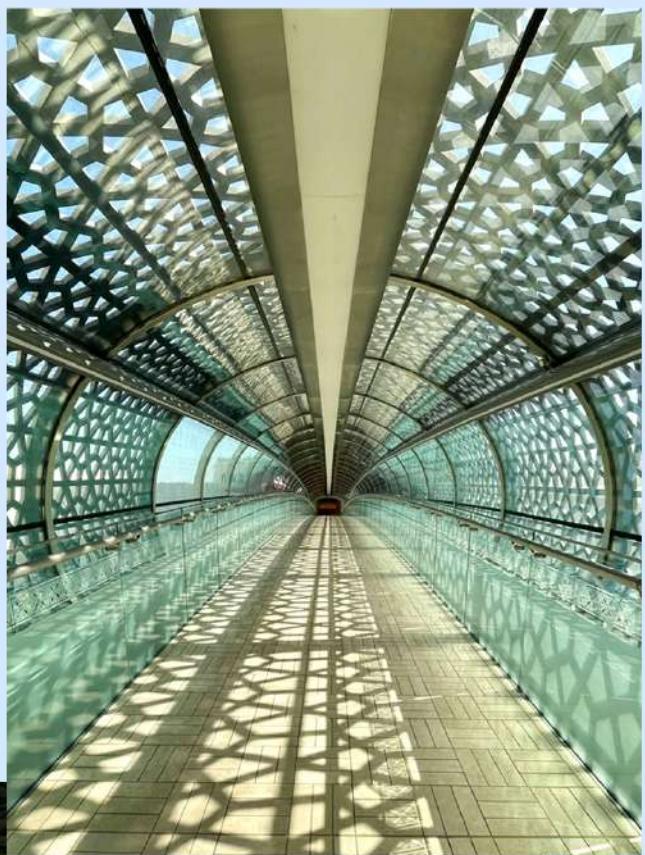




Night views of Royal Opera House

The Royal Opera House, commissioned by the late Sultan Qaboos in 2011, is a remarkable structure that I hold dear. Its contemporary Omani design makes it stand out as one of the most magnificent architectural marvels of Muscat. The opera house complex houses a concert theatre, an auditorium, beautifully landscaped formal gardens, cultural market, luxury restaurants, and an art center.





Interior Views of the Opera House (all pics on this page by Raffat Nayyar)



Dedicated to musical, theatrical, and operatic productions, it offers a comprehensive range of facilities. As a cultural hub for art and entertainment, the Royal Opera House has a maximum capacity of 1,100 individuals and hosts some of the world's most splendid performances, which I have been privileged to attend.

Superb architecture of the Royal Opera House





The Sharqia Sands (above) and Sunset at Muscat (below)

As someone who has spent a significant portion of her life in Oman, it holds a special place in my heart as a second home. Oman deserves a spot on the list of must-see places in the world. Its breathtaking landscapes encompass a range of features including gorgeous mountains, beautiful valleys, serene deserts, wadis and lovely beaches. Moreover, the warmth and hospitality of the Omani people are among its most attractive and commendable qualities.





Rugged scenery of Oman (pic by Raffat Nayyar)

The sea side at Old Muscat town with back drop of rugged mountains



Golconda - Precursor of Hyderabad

(Text and pictures by Abbas Tyabji)



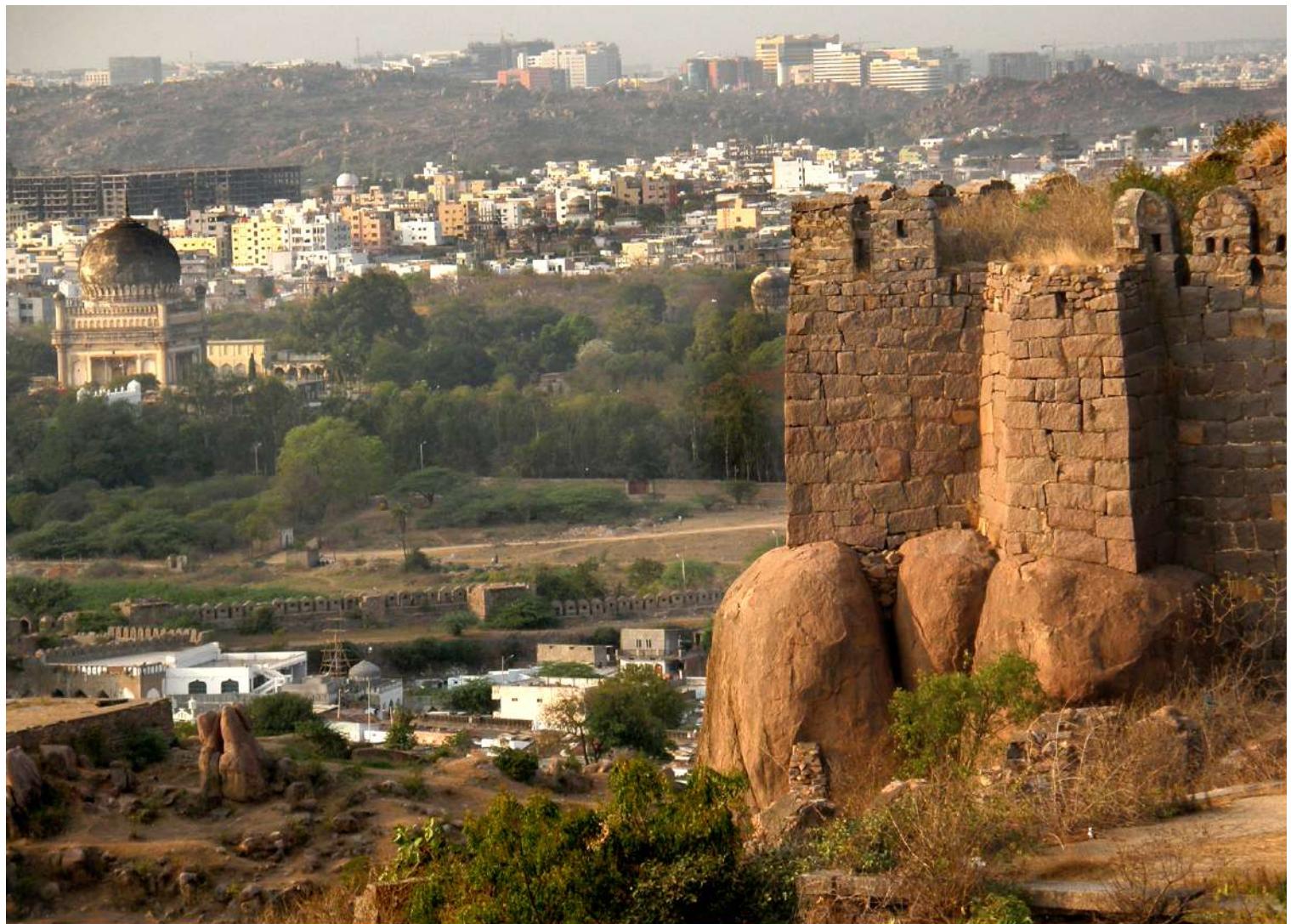
General view of Golconda fort

When I first set my eyes on Golconda fort on the outskirts of Hyderabad, I was stunned. How could anyone have even thought of using the huge boulders, some 40 feet high, to build their fort with? I remember it was my late Mama (maternal uncle) who first introduced us to this stupendous piece of human endeavor. He was a master of Deccan history and after leading us up about 400 steps to the top, he made us sit on the parapet of where the kings held court, and regaled us with its history.

The Bahamanis, rulers of Bidar, about 130 km from Golconda, had been trying to capture this mud fort which came under the Kakatiyas of Warangal. They had waged wars from mid 15th century till the end of the century and around 1490 they managed to capture it. They then built a solid stone wall with a circumference of around 11 km, much of it snaking over huge rocks.



Winding entrance to the Fort



A view of the Hi-tech city from the top of the fort. Some Qutub Shahi Tombs are in foreground

The first ruler Qutub ul Mulk then gained the title, Qutubshahi and the dynasty by that name ruled from Golconda till its conquest by Aurangzeb in 1687.

It was Queen Mother,(saheba) Hayat Bakshi Begum, who was on the throne since her son was very young, and who managed to keep the ambitious Aurangzeb away for 30 long years.

However, when Aurangzeb's generals declared the futility of the war, the Moghul emperor thought of bribing some of the Qutub shahi generals to open the gates at night. So he then managed to occupy Golconda, which also had the world renowned diamond mines located about 250 kms away.

Before the capture, the foundation of a new city had been laid by the 4th Qutubshahi ruler Mohammad Quli qutub shahi and named Hyderabad in honour of his queen. He had built the now renowned Charminar as a symbol of the new city of Hyderabad in 1591.

A New Fort was bulit later to protect it from the Moghul Invaders. The highlight of the fort is a 400 year old baobab tree planted by the Abyssinian soldiers of the Golconda army. It is one of the biggest in the world.



The 11 km long winding wall,in some places 4 feet thick, protected the fort from invaders



The Golconda Fort lit up for a ceremonial occasion

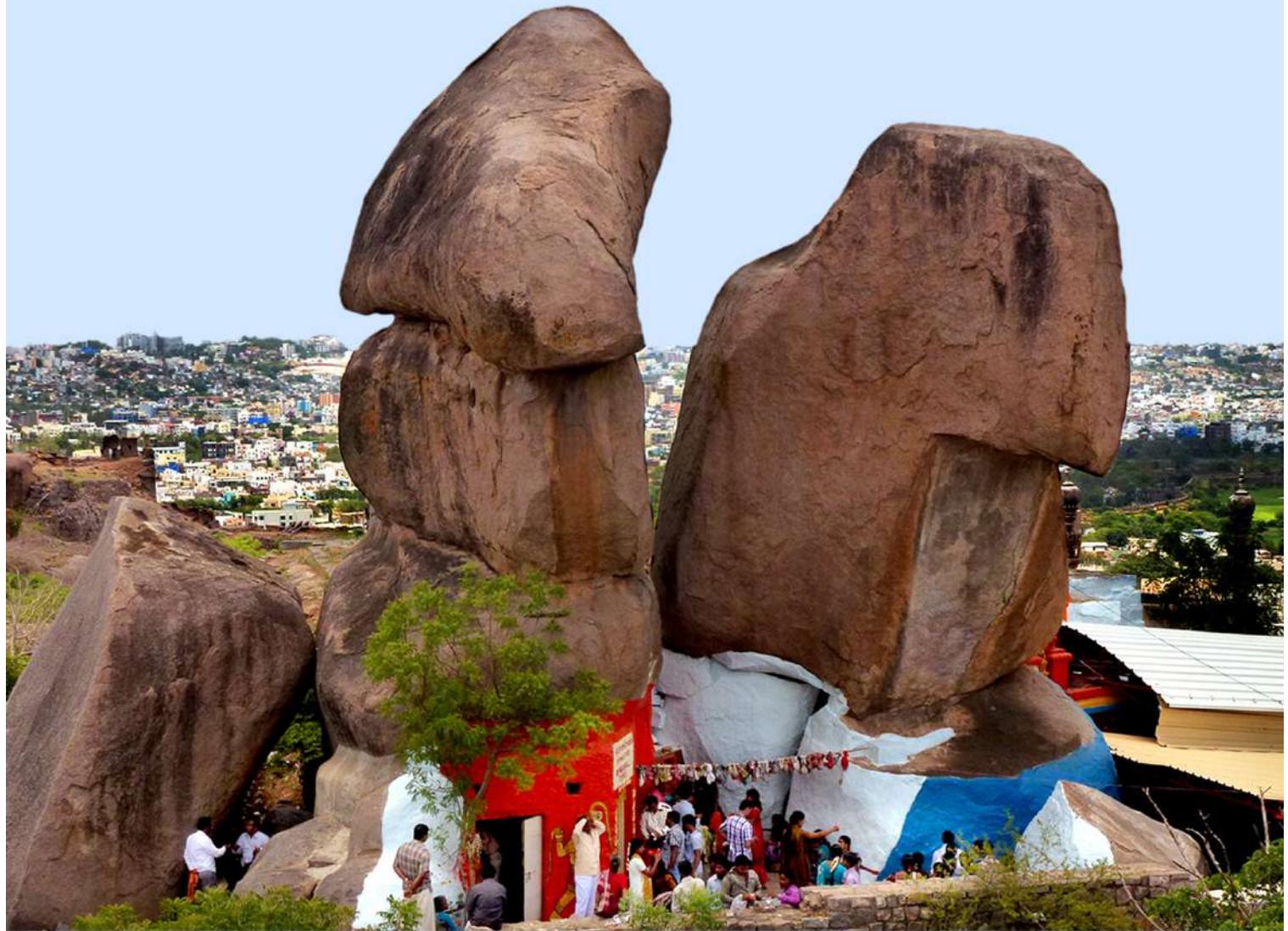


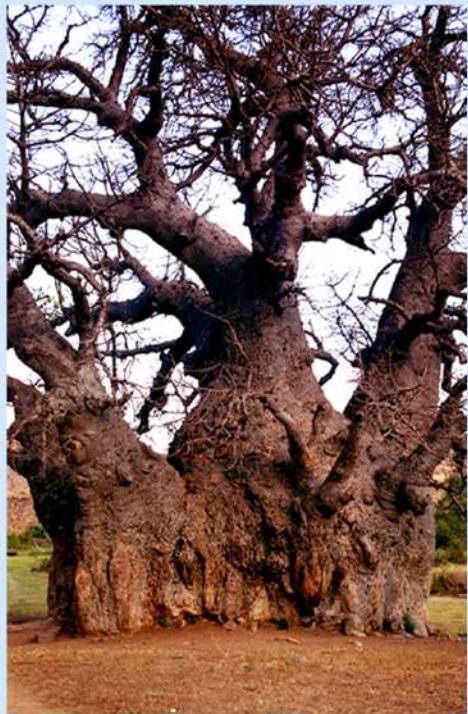
Golconda Fort lit up at night for the Sound and Light show



Huge rocks that tower over the Mahakali temple in photo below. On right is a 400 year old cannon with verses from the Quran.

Two boys are seen doing a massage using the cannon





A 400 year old baobab tree in the New Fort



The walls of the Golconda Fort are built on huge 3.5 Billion years old rocks



A woman carrying a Bonum in the Golconda fort .

In the foreground is a Thotella, a paper model of a temple spire

Bonalu -
a
festival
offering thanks
to
Goddess Mahakali

(Text and pictures by Abbas Tyabji)



Women carrying Bonums

Bonalu is a traditional Hindu festival centered on the Goddess Mahakali worshipped in Telangana. This festival is celebrated annually in the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad, as well as in other parts of the state. It is celebrated in the month of Ashada Masam, which is around July and /or August. Special "poojas" (worship / ceremonies) are performed for Yellamma (one of the many regional forms of Mahakali) on the first and last day of the festival. The festival is also considered a thanksgiving to the Goddess for fulfillment of vows.

The word Bonam is a contraction of the word Bhojanam, a Sanskrit word which means a meal or a feast. It is an offering to the Mother Goddess. Women prepare rice cooked with milk and jaggery in a new brass or earthen pot adorned with neem leaves, turmeric, vermillion and a lit lamp on top of the pot. Women carry the pots on their heads and make an offering of the Bonam along with turmeric-vermillion, bangles and saris to the Mother Goddess, in all the temples.

Bonalu involves the worship of Mother Goddess in regional forms like Maisamma, Pochamma, Yellamma, Peddhamma, Dokkalamma, Ankalamma, Poleramma, Maremma and Nookalamma.

A woman carrying a Bonum climbing the steps of Golconda fort .

In the background is a view of the Army Cantonment





A girl in a trance dances in front of the Mahakali Temple on the top of the Golconda Fort

Origin of Bonalu

The origin of this festival can be traced back to the 18th century in the erstwhile Hyderabad State, and is linked with the "Regimental Bazaar" and the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. In the year 1813, a plague broke out in the twin cities, and this took the lives of thousands of people. Just before this, a military battalion from Hyderabad was deployed to Ujjain. When this battalion from Hyderabad got to know about the epidemic in the twin cities, they prayed to the Mother Goddess in Mahakali Temple – Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh. The battalion supposedly prayed to Goddess Mahakali to kill the plague, and if the goddess did so, they would install an idol of the Goddess Mahakali in the city. It is believed that Mahakali destroyed the disease and kept the pestilence away. Then, the battalion returned to the city and installed an idol of the goddess, which was followed by the offering of Bonalu to her. This then became a tradition that has been followed by most of the people of Telangana. The major temples, where the goddess is worshiped, are in Secunderbad, Lal Darwaza, Hyderabad and the Golconda Fort.

There are also other versions regarding the origin of the festival. This includes the mythological story that this is the time when Goddess Mahakali comes back to her parental home, during Ashada Maasam or the period from late June to August, which makes this the most auspicious time to offer Bonalu to the goddess. This practice is comparable to the treatment meted to a married daughter who returns to her parents' home each year for a vacation and is pampered by them.

A woman entering the temple carrying a Bonum on her head (right)



A foreign tourist, whom I took to the Golconda Fort, takes a photo of ladies waiting to enter the Mahakali temple (below)



PREVIEW OF FUTURE ISSUES

LAPLAND



Sunset in Lapland pic by Raija Ellonen
On top of the world, close to the North Pole, Lapland is one of the less travelled places on Earth. We are fortunate to have a description of a visit there by Raija Ellonen, friend of my school classmate Raoul Gomes , who now lives in Finland.

PHONGSALI



Phongsali town pic by Sivongxay Panyahak

This is a very isolated part of Laos on its northeastern border with China and Vietnam. A very hilly and rugged area, it is best suited to adventure seekers and hikers. Details about the area are by Mr Xay of Amazing Travels and Tours, Phongsali

WE HOPE OUR READERS WILL CONTRIBUTE ARTICLES /PICTURES AND FORWARD THIS MAGAZINE TO THEIR CONTACTS SO THAT MORE PEOPLE CAN READ AND PERHAPS BENEFIT FROM IT

This magazine is Edited and Designed by Abbas Tyabji with the assistance of Talla Goutham of Charm Photo Inn



HIDDEN GEMS OF KERALA

Kerala is well known at least to most Indians but Abbas Tyabji, Editor, discovered a few priceless gems during his recent self drive through the mountainous part of the state.

*Ponmudi dam
pic by Abbas Tyabji*

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Abbas A, Tyabji is a Hyderabad, India, based photo journalist, who left Tata Motors, one of the largest auto makers in India after heading the Publications Division of the Company over a career spanning nearly 3 decades.

During his tenure he travelled all over India and to neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bhutan, Mauritius and the Middle East on photo journalistic assignments. His articles, pictures and photo features appeared not only in the Company publications but in national and international magazines.

He was invited by the then People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (S Yemen) to photograph the natural and man made wonders of that ancient land and prepare publicity material for their govt. The effort was appreciated by Govt officials and even India's Ambassador to S Yemen wrote an appreciation letter to Tatas on his efforts.

He is the recipient of over 50 national and international awards including:

The President of India's Award for Excellence in Designing and Printing on TWO OCCASIONS

Best Feature Writer Award from the Association of Business Communicators of India 4 times

Best Photo Feature Award from the Association of Business Communicators of India 5 times

The internationally circulated magazine "Bus Ride" from the US found his pictures so exceptional that they selected 2 for the First Place Award in their 1989 Worldwide photo competition, the only time in their history that two pictures were given this honour.

Almost half a dozen of his pictures appeared in Japanese calendars and dozens have graced Indian calendars.

He has also published a book on Hyderabad, for which the text, photography and design was done by him.

For his photo journalistic achievements he has found mention in "Who's Who of India", and "Reference Asia".

He also operates guided, customised tours from Hyderabad and is listed in LONELY PLANET as a Tour Guide.

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Abbas Tyabji receiving the President of India Award for Excellence in Designing and Printing from then President of India Dr. N. Sanjeeva Reddy