



History lives in Hyderabad's homes, says architect **Yeshwant Ramamurthy**



WITH ITS story that began over 400 years ago, Hyderabad's legacy continues to live in its structures. In as many ways that the history of the city shapes the lives of its individuals,

there is a symbiotic response in the reciprocal role of its citizens in shaping the built form of a city's heritage.

While the many familiar civic monuments such as Charminar and Golkonda fort emphatically define the milestones of our history, old private houses of Hyderabad's gentility tell the story of our past in a more intimate and personal vocabulary. Every home was a calm oasis into which one retreated each day from the larger agenda of nation building. Indeed, the intimacy of its ambience was the literal and metaphorical space within which growth of an individual, his family and eventually the community germinated and matured into a collective manifestation of the cultural and socioeconomic matrix of a city's affluence.

Architecture has been characterised as frozen music. While composing the score for each symphonic creation, its architect builds on the foundation of inter-related spaces for strong basic har-

monising connotations influence our lifestyles. Hyderabad's surviving heritage homes bear testimony to the architecture that shaped our past. Their dwindling numbers withstand the onslaught of development with diminishing resilience.

#### CHENOY'S RESIDENCE, Marredpally

Cool Y Chenoy's serene Marredpally home is an extension of her gracious personality. Built in the 1940s, its Colonial style features a gallery that encircles the core of the house. In inventing the verandah, architecture turned savour. It screened the cantonment bungalow from the formidable heat. It segregated the rosewood and damask of the inside from the cane and chintz of the outside. It insulated imperial sensibilities from native heat-seeking.

Elegant furniture, sparsely displayed accessories and ferns-in-urns gives this home a tangible placidity. The pride and passion of the owner in preserving its, *metel castings and memories* make it one of the finest odes to Secunderabadi style.

#### FATEH MANZIL, Khairatabad

Till recently, when the march of time altered their leisurely pace, Preeti and



◀ A balanced calmness; Chenoy's Residence

the few, but spacious rooms and across wide verandahs into the heart of the home, a luxuriant courtyard that whispered 'Shanti, shanti, shanti!...'

#### MUJADDADY HOUSE, Humayunnagar

Tucked away from the hustle and bustle of Humayunnagar, is a graceful 19th century home which in true terms accentuates the aura of an 'oasis'. Set in the middle of immaculately landscaped pockets, typical of the "garden pavilion" concept of Deccani architecture, Mujaddady House is presently occupied by Mateen and Mubeen Ahmed Mujaddady. A symmetrical facade gives it the grandeur of Indo-Saracenic architecture. Despite the age of the building, the interior of the house is imposing and well maintained. The main family

room has an eclectic collection of furniture ranging from renaissance to art nouveau, which mirrors the lifestyle of the family. The house is subdivided into several rooms, including a zenana or ladies room which is distinct in its scale of furniture and artifacts. Low bay windows bring the garden view indoors. As we move further inwards, one reaches a verandah which overlooks a garden and a swimming pool imparting a strong Moorish ambience to the house. Mujaddady residence is an exemplary illustration of Hyderabad's Islamic legacy.

#### RAUNAQA, Lakdi-Ka-Pul

Belonging to an affluent nawabi family this house aptly named 'Raunaq' is quaintly screened away behind a school premises at AC Gaudis in Lakdi-Ka-

▶ A fountain defines the sense of arrival, Raunaq

◀ Life seeps onto the verandah; Fateh Manzil

Pul. Over a short flight of stairs, the facade combines strong geometric elements in co-axial symmetry. The layout of the house is a fine example of British Colonial architecture with its very open plan. It displays a balanced blend of Islamic and Hindu elements in the interiors that are evident in the imposing wooden pillars and stained glass on the verandah. Wooden rafters and steel girders are a prominent feature in most of the rooms. The house has been wholeheartedly nurtured by the occupants Nawab Sajjat Ali Khan and Rehana Khan, who have restored and

expanded this home in a style compliant with the original structure.

In their diversity of geographical location, building styles, interior decor and the cultural backgrounds of their owners, one commonality strongly binds these homes. None of them depend on the transience of whimsical fashion trends in order to establish aesthetic standards. Through the graciousness of spaces, forms and evolved sensibilities, they exude a charmingly stylish and timeless elegance. Indeed history pauses at the threshold of Hyderabad's heritage homes. Hopefully for posterity. ■

INPUTS FROM AIR, UNNATI PINGE

