

HISTORY BY FAIZ A. SIDDIQUI

A plea for preservation

The neglect of a historic building in Hyderabad

The second largest city of Sindh, Hyderabad has many ancient buildings like Partab Mahal, Moti Mahal, Basant Hall, Jethanand Hostel, Sindh University old campus building, Mukhi House and others. Majority of these historical buildings are now being demolished and replaced by big plazas and complexes.

These buildings are mainly from the pre-partition era. After independence, no government took any interest in preserving these ancient buildings. Among these buildings is the Mukhi House which is part of the historical heritage of Hyderabad.

Situated opposite Holm Stead Hall near Pacca Fort, Mukhi House was constructed by Mukhi Jethanand s/o Pritamdas. Mukhi Jethanand's family belonged to the business community and he also followed suit. But this didn't stop him from getting involved in political and social activities and panchayat matters. He joined the Congress party, but then left it and then was elected Mukhi (head of panchayat) of Sindh unanimously by the entire Hindu Panchayat.



BEARING THE RAVAGES OF TIME: The beautiful facade of Mukhi House

constructed an excellent palace, store and there is a small hall on Department of Board of

Mukhi Jethanand was twice elected the member of Bombay Constituent Assembly. He spend thousands of rupees on the beautification of his ancestral garden, "Mukhi Bagh" which has now been totally destroyed. He then left the family home located at Mukhi street and con-



WAITING FOR A SAVIOUR: Who will save this building?

Mukhi House. While no exact figure is available, after looking at the beautiful building, it can be judged that it must have cost several lakhs of rupees at that time.

Mukhi Jethanand died at the age of 44, in 1927. His successor was his brother Mukhi Gobindernath, who was a renowned philanthropist. He was also director Hindu fund which was collected for the welfare of the Hindu community. He was also a member of the Hyderabad Municipal Committee, and president of Tolaram Girls High School for about three years.

In 1936, when Sindh was given the status of province, after separation from the Bombay presidency, Mukhi Gobindernath became an advisor to the Sindh governor on the Hindu community. He was also elected member of Sindh legislative assembly and became minister of irrigation, health and industry at different times.

Mukhi House has eight rooms on the ground floor. It has one

the western side. There is also a big hall with flower work. On the front and back side of the hall are two verandas. There is also an open courtyard on both sides of veranda. A stair case goes to first floor of the buildings. On the first floor of the building, six rooms have been constructed of which two rooms and a small hall are located on eastern side whereas two rooms and a store room is located on western side. There is a big hall between them. On the southern side there is a beautiful balcony.

The building is made up of high quality material, such as white marble, Jodhpur stone and lime and plaster of Paris. The doors and windows are of sheesham wood and covered with ornamental glasses. The floor tiles are also of white marble.

Mukhi House is now a property of evacuee trust which is under the control of Preservation and Heritage Department of Hyderabad Development Authority.

Attempts have been made to set this fine building on fire by miscreants. During the riots of late-'80s it had been set on fire and the front portion of the structure was partially damaged.

When this writer visited this ancient site, it came as a shock to see that the first floor was occupied by Settlement

Revenue, Sindh. I enquired about the sorry state of the place and was told, "We are not concerned, nor are we responsible for the damage."

The first floor is occupied by the jawans of the Frontier Constabulary who did not let me enter the place and take photographs. Goats and hens could be seen roaming in the veranda while rifles and ammunition could be seen in the room.

The entire building was looked like a 'Bhoot Bangla'.

When I went to the office of the Hyderabad Development Authority's Building Control Authority, the Assistant Director of Preservation and Heritage Department Ms Farhat Jabeen informed me that a proposal had been sent to the government regarding renovation of the Mukhi House. But the most important thing, according to Ms. Farhat Jabeen was proper security arrangement, as the house was located in a very sensitive area and attempts had been made to set it on fire.

Mukhi House is a fine, rare specimen of architecture. This building of historical importance needs proper attention of the government. It is still not too late to save this lovely site which is a vital part of the historical heritage of Hyderabad. ■

Restoration Conservation and Rescue of Mukhi House and Establishment of *Mukhi House Museum*









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