

PRESS RELEASE

DECCAN HERITAGE FOUNDATION



October-December 2023



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Non-profit organisation Deccan Heritage Foundation announces major restoration projects in Hyderabad, Mysuru and Hampi, and the launch of its comprehensive e-guidebooks for the Deccan region.

The Deccan region of India is home to thousands of monuments of historic, artistic, and architectural significance dedicated to several faiths — Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Christianity, Buddhism — as well as a myriad of non-religious monuments, such as forts, palaces and water storage systems. With the pace at which India is growing, whole landscapes are undergoing transformation, threatening the very existence of these monuments and altering livelihood patterns in the surrounding areas.

The Deccan Heritage Foundation (DHF) is dedicated to preserving, restoring and promoting the architectural heritage of the Deccan region. DHF partners with experts, local residents and patrons to undertake architectural conservation projects that are socially minded, keeping the values of local entrepreneurship, community ownership and the environment at the forefront. Past projects it has completed include the restoration of Gagan Mahal Pavilion in Anegundi, Karnataka; the Sadar Sofa, Khwaja Bande Nawaz Dargah in Gulbarga, Karnataka; the cemetery at The British Residency in Hyderabad, Telangana; and plans for the restoration of the Baridi Gardens in Bidar, Karnataka..

A core objective of DHF's restoration and community projects is to develop a sustainable model of heritage management by institutionalising historic building maintenance and management, building an in-house capacity and engaging the local community. Following the rehabilitation and revitalisation of an ancient hydraulic system in Bidar, Karnataka, DHF launched a solid waste management program involving the community in the area. DHF also takes on numerous initiatives to promote the art and culture of the Deccan through its webinars and lectures, and facilitates travel to the Deccan region with its informative books and guidebooks.



Jayalakshmi Vilas Mansion,
Mysuru, Karnataka

Key Highlights and Announcements

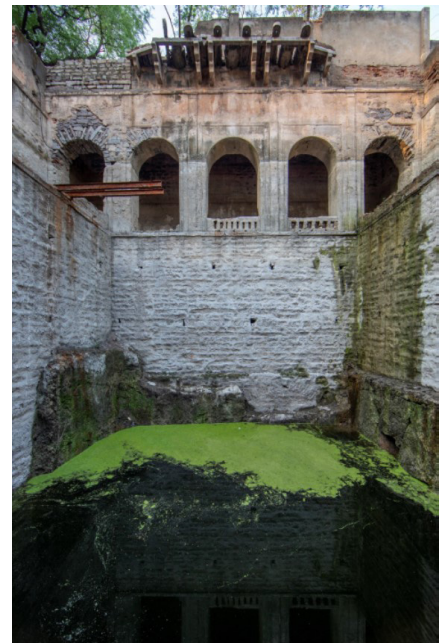
Ongoing and Planned Restoration Projects:

The DHF has begun restoration work on several historic sites that aims to rehabilitate architectural marvels and reinstate their original grandeur. It is currently supporting the completion of an Archaeological Atlas and the development of digital tools for the better protection and interpretation of the celebrated UNESCO World Heritage Site of Hampi in Karnataka. After setting up a Documentation and Archival Centre in 2019, DHF has begun documenting the Deccan's severely threatened built heritage, starting with Bidar, Karnataka, and consolidating the research scholarship of eminent scholars working on the Deccan.

The DHF has joined the World Monuments Fund (WMF) in the rehabilitation of the former British Residency Complex, in Hyderabad, Telangana, now part of Osmania Women's University campus. With the generous support of Sonata Software Technology Ltd., the DHF is currently restoring the Rang Mahal, a charming pleasure pavilion, and its surrounding garden, which had fallen into ruin. The Rang Mahal garden is a unique example of a Deccani architectural landscape, and the DHF plans to re-introduce several indigenous species of plants and trees at the site. The DHF is also developing courses on heritage management and museology for the University's curriculum.

The DHF is currently raising funds to restore and revive three historic stepwells across the campus of Osmania University, which are in a dilapidated state due to years of neglect. Research and mapping conducted by The Rainwater Project and SAHE show that all these stepwells are connected through subterranean aquifers. Once restored, these water systems would not only meet the modern-day needs of the University, but they would also recharge the groundwater.

DHF along with the University of Mysore has been awarded a grant from the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) for the conservation of the Jayalakshmi Vilas Mansion along with its museum, which houses one of the most important collections of vernacular and ethnographic artefacts in Karnataka. Only 25 to 30 projects are selected for this competitive grant from across the world. The DHF proposes to restore and refurbish the Mansion, and catalogue its collections, estimated at around 10,000 artefacts.



Stepwell at Education Department, Osmania University, Hyderabad, Telangana

Photo credit: Maniyarasan R

Quotes

To promote greater knowledge of the Deccan's vibrant architecture, DHF has commissioned the publication of guidebooks and books, authored by highly highly regarded professionals in the field. It has also created illustrative itineraries and guidebooks, some of which are freely available on their website, while others are for sale on the DHF Bookstore. DHF is pleased to present its guidebooks as e-guides, available for immediate download to smartphones and tablets via the DHF online bookstore.

"The Deccan region of peninsular India is home to an astonishing range of sites dating from the Buddhist, Hindu, Jain, Muslim, Portuguese, and British periods. Most of these shrines, temples, forts, palaces, tombs, mosques, and churches are not nearly well known enough. The DHF fills this gap by offering a range of profusely illustrated guidebooks that provide essential information for general travellers, interested scholars and students. Available in both paperback and digital versions, they will make visits to Deccan's historical monuments an educational and pleasurable experience."

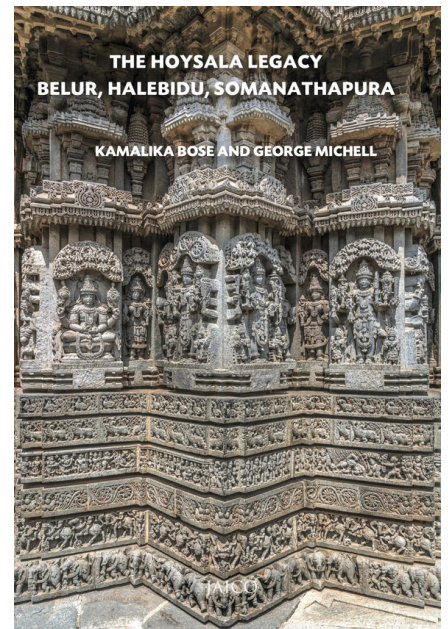
– Dr. George Michell, Founding Trustee of the DHF

"For the last decade, the DHF UK, the DHF India and the Friends of the DHF in the US have worked together on our projects to restore the rich cultural heritage of the Deccan. For us, the Deccan is a passion and the restoration projects, most of which are in Karnataka and in Telangana, have been remarkable."

– Ambassador Latha Reddy, Chairperson of DHF India

"We place a high priority on partnering with local stakeholders of historical sites and monuments and interacting creatively and responsibly with local communities. Among the recently completed DHF projects are the restoration of an underground canal (qanat) system that brings fresh water to people living on the outskirts of Bidar, and the refurbishment of the Gagan Mahal in Anegundi, a pavilion in the middle of the village that now serves as an activity centre. By empowering local people at these and other historical sites, and developing their everyday skills, the DHF enables them and their descendants to be effective guardians of the Deccan's unique heritage."

– Dr. Helen Philon, Founding Trustee of the DHF



*The Hoysala Legacy
Belur, Halebidu, Somnathapura*

Text by Kamalika Bose and
George Michell
Photography by Surendra Kumar
Paperback and e-guidebook
152 pages
Jaico Publishing House

ABOUT DHF

Founded by architectural historians Helen Philon and George Michell, with Stephane Bloch Saloz as co-founder, the Deccan Heritage Foundation comprises of a committed group of scholars, philanthropists and heritage workers from around the world, united by a common purpose — to restore, maintain and inform the public about the Deccan's built heritage.



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Press

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