

Hyderabadi Baataan (Tales of Hyderabad)

Written by Madhura Deshpande
Tuesday, 28 June 2011 01:57



[Read Hyderabadi Baataan - Part 2 here!](#)

Hyderabad!! The city of Nizams, Charminar, Golconda, Salarjung museum, Ravindra Bharati, Birla Mandir, Dakkhani boli, mouthwatering Biryani, spicy Mirchi ka Saalan, Gokul chaat and sweet Khubani ka Meetha. It's been well over a decade since I left Hyderabad (and India) behind. Time and distance are starting to work their magic on my psyche. But the myriad memories of Hyderabad are still fresh and vivid, just like from the day they were born.

I associate Hyderabad with two distinctive characteristics – the leisurely Nizami lifestyle, unlike other metros in India, and the quintessential Dakkhani or Hyderabadi language. It is no secret that we Indians are fiercely loyal to the Indian Standard Time (aka being fashionably late and many a times really late). But true Hyderabadis take it a notch higher. The concept of time is almost non-existent in this city. I remember the handymen, plumbers, electricians etc., who would come to fix things at our house. They would tell my dad - “Ek dum subbah subbah aatun

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saab kal". With great anticipation, we would all be ready early the next morning. And as promised, "janaab" would make an appearance at our front door at 10 am. Then it was time to down a few cups of chai and an effort to do some khitpit for a couple of hours. By then it would be lunch time. Now my mom would be told – "Khaana khaane jaaroon amma, abhhi aatun".

Little did

we know that "abhhi" meant 3 pm and sometimes even the next couple of days.

Hyderabadis have a unique style of greeting their friends. For a long long time, I was convinced that "Kya bay howle!" was the coolest way to say hello. All the boys in my school were very proficient at such highly creative expressions, many of which I can't share here. The girls were a little less imaginative with their "Kyaaa re...kya karri tu?" Speaking of "Howle", once, while on a vacation tour to Srirangapatnam, I heard a street vendor shouting "Howle leyo!!" The bewilderment on my face must have been very evident as I was thinking "Howle? Howle kaisa bechte??" For the less enlightened creatures, "Howle" is a popular Hyderabad term of endearment that means "Crazy" or "Paagal". Sensing my eagerness to solve the mystery, my parents quickly led the way towards the direction of the sound. As we turned the corner, we saw a woman sitting behind a huge pile of "Awle", the sour Indian gooseberry. We must have looked like "Pakka Howle" that day as we laughed till our cheeks ached.

Cycle rickshaws were a very popular mode of transport in Hyderabad in the 80s. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the concept, it is a 3 wheeled carriage, pedaled manually by the "rikshawallah". I will never ever sit in another one of those. It seems way too inhuman now. But in those days, it was either the rickshaw, ride your own cycle or walk. For many years, my evenings would begin with a standard dialogue with the rickshawallahs outside our school premises. As my little brother would wearily tug at my skirt, urging me to take him back home quickly, I would begin the negotiations.

Me - "Chalte rickshaw? Kachiguda? Kitta lete?"

Rickshawallah – "Dedh rupiya (Rs.1.50)"

Me – "Dedh rupiya kaiku? Roj savva rupiya (Rs.1.25) me jaate na"

Eventually, I would be successful in finding "The One" that would take us home in "Savva

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rupiya". I think "Savva rupiya" is now extinct, to be found only in museums and the rickshawallahs have pretty much disappeared too.

The memories of Hyderabad are innumerable - some funny, some touching, but mostly simple ones, those of the daily grind. Normally, they stay "Parde ke peeche" but once in a while something comes along that brings them to the surface, just like the serene waves of Hussain Sagar. Alas! As they would say in Hyderabad, "Baataan bahut ho gaye, ab thoda kaam karo miyaan!"

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