

OUR BANGALORE

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A WALK THROUGH TIME

Step into the heart of old Bangalore and embark on a captivating journey through its lesser-known treasures – a dargah, a temple, and an artisans' den; all within a single walk

SILKWEAVING

Bindu Gopal Rao

If you have lived in Bangalore for a while, you might believe that you know a lot about the city. However, to the city's credit, it has numerous secrets up its very able sleeve that take some effort to discover. Signing up for a Pettah walk in "Nagarathpet: The Silk Tales", I uncovered many interesting aspects of the city that I call home.

The Story of Kempe Gowda

Starting with a hearty South Indian breakfast at a local eatery in the area, we first received a quick overview of Kempe Gowda, a 16th-century chieftain under the Vijayanagara Empire and the founder of Bangalore. The city was built around the Avenue Road circle, with oxen used to plough the land in all four directions.

The history of this area dates back to 1537, and Kempe Gowda, known for his visionary approach, is believed to have invited traders from different parts of South India to settle here. Nagarathpet, for instance, belongs to the Nagara community, who served as town criers in the past. Each trade was practiced by different communities. Despite the city's prosperity, Bangalore faced several attempts at capture, resulting in rule by the

Marathas, Wadiyars, Tipu Sultan, and the British. There was even a battle for Bangalore in 1791.

Sufi Calling

The first stop was at Asthana-E-Hazrath Khwaja Syed Shah Sharfuddin Khadri Shaheed-RA, the resting place of a valiant soldier and Sufi follower in Tipu Sultan's army who died during the 1791 Siege of Bangalore. The small space is serene, with his tomb placed in the middle.

The marble walls around the tomb feature rich inlay work, while the glass ceilings above display intricate Urdu script (verses from the Quran), chandeliers, and lamps. Stone cannonballs, remnants of the war, are also seen in the dargah.

Mansoor Ali from Bengaluru by Foot, a group of locals organising walks around the city, chimes in, "When it was cold at night, the Sufis draped themselves with woollen clothes, and the Arabic word for wool is Suf, which is the origin of Sufism. Incidentally, the Sufis were commanded by the Prophet to spread Islam peacefully around the world. Countries like Russia, Morocco, Indonesia, and South Africa have Sufi dargahs like this."

Karaga Tales

The next stop was at the Dhar-



Cannon balls at Asthana-E-Hazrath Khwaja Syed Shah Sharfuddin Khadri Shaheed-RA



Dharmaraya Swamy Temple

USEFUL TIPS

- Make sure that you are mindful of time.
- As there are places of worship, dress accordingly.
- Wear comfortable footwear as this is a walk.
- Carry your own water bottles.
- Removal of footwear before entering the religious places, silk weavers/dyers is compulsory.
- Stick with your guide as the narrow by-lanes can leave you feeling lost if you miss your way.
- Gundappa sweets is a store that is famous for the Dumroot Halwa and Mysore Paak is located in this area.

*** The walk was organised by Bengaluru by Foot

maraya Swamy Temple, whose principal deity is Draupadi, the wife of the five Pandavas. This temple is the venue of the annual Karaga temple. It is believed that Draupadi created an army of brave sons or Veera Kumaras to defeat demon Timirasura whom she kills in the war.

The Veera Kumaras requested Draupadi to stay with them but she promises to come back every year for three days which is celebrated as Karaga. The main priest of the temple wears his wife's sari and mangalsutra, places five pots on his head decked with jasmine floors. Silt from a sacred tank near Kanteerava indoor stadium is taken and placed in these pots and the five pots are symbolic of the Pandavas and the jasmine symbolises the Thigalars, the community that does the karaga. Every year during the Karaga festival, hundreds of thousands of devotees pay respects to the Goddess.

Interestingly, the priest visits the tomb of an 18th century Muslim saint as part of the Karaga procession as well. The temple spire is majestic and

makes for some great photo opps and the horns on top are symbolic of the horns of the bulls. The urns on top are symbolic of the connection between heaven and the earth and lightning conductors.

Silk Route

The area is also home to silk weavers and dyers and the walk will take you to a small-scale silk-dyeing unit. The minute you enter the small workshop the outer hall is a riot of colour thanks to the various colours of dry-dyed silk yarn hanging from the roof. There are sacks of white yarn waiting to be dyed as well.

The inner hall is where you can see a lot of action as it has both the furnaces and the urns that are used for dyeing and rinsing dyed yarn. The place is hot and you must be careful not just to take care of yourself but also not disturb the workers who are here. Walk down the lane and you can also see weavers who alter this year's to clothes – mainly saris. There has been a shift from handlooms to power looms as they are economical and the workers need less space for the same.

In all this is a tour that brings to light a new aspect of Bangalore – a city that is home for many of us and yet manages to surprise you with its layers of history and heritage.



Asthana-E-Hazrath Khwaja Syed Shah Sharfuddin Khadri Shaheed-RA



Silk threads from the roof