

MYTHS, CREEDS, LEGENDS AND TRUTH

“Myths and creeds are heroic struggles to comprehend the truth in this world.”

- Ansel Adams

A myth is like a veil, invariably drawn to high-light a tantalising glimpse of truth. It grows around a physical or historical fact, cladding it with fiction and yet in the process immortalising it as a story.

The concept of the ancient *Dant-kathas*, where information was passed on verbally from one generation to the other, often made these stories more fantastic as time elapsed.

And yet the basic truth beneath these layers of stories remains intact for those who seek for it. Be it the elusive holy grail, or the Ganga falling on to Shiva’s locks from the heavens, the parting of the red sea at Moses’s call or the tales of Paladin, each myth has had its own seekers – trying to unravel the tales of the super-natural to find the simple, unadorned truth.

The Academy for Sustainable Habitat Research and Action, ASHRA, therefore announces the Back to Basics Trophy for Students of Architecture, B2B TROPHY.

B2B TROPHY is an attempt to unravel the mystery behind the history of such myths and legends which abound all across India.

This will be open to all those students registered with the National Association of Schools of Architecture, NASA.

As it is said that “History repeats itself and Historians repeat each other” and so it is with the legends and myths in India.

The purpose of this competition is to encourage young architects to go beyond the taught as in the classroom or bookish material and travel in their free time to the places where these legends exist, try to understand the hidden meaning and discover for themselves why these places are revered as they are.

BACK TO BASICS TROPHY 2011

In doing so we feel that students would learn that which Sustainable Human Settlement is about and as it should be understood with the hidden truth behind these civilisations and their relevance to the specific areas of study.

These would then be edited, compiled and possibly published with the purpose of culling out the wisdom so that others may do further work in this direction.

The intent here is to “Sow the seed” and let it float.

There is wisdom of the past that is eluding us and getting to understand this wisdom of the past by taking a “Step back to the future”, is a direction that possibly needs to be revisited.

Since this is the first time such a competition is being floated, we are giving clues so as to set the tenor of what such a challenge would entail.

This intent behind this competition is to pick interesting myths from our rich heritage and demystify each of them so as to discover the hidden rational truth behind each of them.

This year we shall be looking at two separate quests, demystifying the myth of Chitrakoot that has slipped through the chasm of time and the other of analysing ancient settlements and discovering their methods of planning and design so as to make such settlements efficient and yet very simple.

Chitrakoot, which literally translates into “the hill of many wonders”, is a little town that straddles the borders of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

An array of legends and myths attach themselves to this hill of the northern Vindhya Range. Many of these legends trace their origins to the ages before the conception of history... ..transcending from legend to myth.

This year we shall be looking at two separate quests, demystifying the myth of Chitrakoot that has slipped through the chasm of time and the other of analysing ancient settlements and discovering their methods of planning and design so as to make such settlements efficient and yet very simple.

The students may choose any of the given challenges and send a detailed documentation and sound rationale so that one may judge their understanding of the problem.

CHALLENGE ONE

Demystifying the Legend of Chitrakoot

To participate in this trophy, it is advised that you visit this area from Madhya Pradesh, via Satna.

As you approach Chitrakoot from the hills, make a mental note of the water marks due to erosion and the probable linkage to Chitrakoot and to Ramayana.

It is believed that Chitrakoot was the first stop of Ram, Sita and Lakshman and the point where Bharat pleads with Lord Ram to return to Ayodhya.

On the refusal of Lord Ram to do so, Bharat carries his brother's wooden slippers and puts them on the throne, running the kingdom in his name, on the principles of Lord Ram, in absentia.

The shelter that Ram chose for himself, his wife and his brother was a cave at Chitrakoot which is also called the Gupt Godavari.

It is believed that Godavari begins in a small kund within this cave and therefore is named *Gupt Godavari*.

The re-emergence of Godavari at Timbrik at Maharashtra is thus a mystery.

In the Gupt Godavari, a narrow entrance opens into a vast cave with apparent beams and columns which seem to be meticulously carved.

It is believed that Ram and Lakshman held court in this cave, which has two natural throne-like rocks.

In the cave, on one side, there is a *shikhara* in the centre of which hangs a huge rock shaped like a bat.

Legend has it that Sita was having a bath here and a demon came and stole her clothes.

Sita called out to Lakshman who cursed the demon and he hangs upside down in the *shikhara* of the cave as a bat.

Hundreds of bats hang around this giant bat, and yet the cave does not emit any foul odour.

What is the possible factor behind this phenomenon?

The water flows from the cave in small rivulets and finds its way out to several man-made tanks.

It is believed that bathing in this water cures any ailments.

What brings healing qualities to this water?

This water then feeds in to a giant lake which is surrounded by several temples.

After this, the outflow of the lake disappears.

It is believed that it reemerges in what we know as the River Godavari.

On the face of it, it defies explanation and therefore students are advised to find plausible reasoning behind this.

There are possible linkages from here to the water erosion marks one spots on hills while coming from Satna.

CHALLENGE TWO

Merits of Ancient Settlements

It is common knowledge that drains require maximum slope and roads require minimum slope.

And yet in our infinite wisdom, we have placed them together, so as to make for a system that is grossly inefficient.

Such glaring inadequacies permeate our current systems and thus warrant research and analysis.

The participating students would therefore be required to take any traditional settlement as a case study and unravel how our fore-fathers handled these challenges.

Why were the forts built atop a highland?

Was the moat in the fort purely a defence mechanism?

Typical densities in a fort were higher than the densities we see today.

Why didn't they have the problems as we have today?

What was their system of waste disposal?

How did they get the water to the highland in the absence of mechanical means to do so?

The main purpose behind this is to cover a wide range of issues related to sustainable habitat and then through rational inferences, come to a tangible solution towards sustainable development.

The entries would be judged on three criteria

A] The most plausible rationale to the myths surrounding Chitrakoot based on possible reasoning and sound understanding of nature and its various quirks.

The winner in this case shall be awarded Rs. 50000/- and would be the recipient of the B2B TROPHY.

The runner up shall receive an award of Rs. 20000/-

B] Best documentation, via drawings, sketches, GIS, photography etc., of this region would be awarded a cash prize of Rs. 20000/-.

The quality of the photography and the in-depth exploration of the physical, geographical and social aspects of this area would form the basis for this award.

The documentation should be relevant to the theme and should be self-conducted.

C] An additional amount of Rs. 10000/- has been ear-marked for students who can suggest myths and legends that would be of interest to us.

The best of them would be selected and would possibly be used at a future date for which the due credit will be given to the student involved.

Submission Requirements

The entry should be accompanied by a letter from the HOD / Principal on the college letterhead with the name / s of the authors and the institution.

The author / s will give a written declaration stating that it is the original work of the respective student/s.

Coloured seal is essential on the letter.

Selection of sheet is left to the discretion of the students with minimum size A3 or above.

Images/ Sketches should be with minimum resolution of 300 dpi.

Shortlisted candidates will be required to make a 10 minute presentation in the final jury conducted during the Annual NASA Convention.

Submission for the trophy would be in soft copy with two CD's containing identical data, one with college name and college code, while other with just college code.

The entry shall be mailed on the following address

The Moderator
Back to Basic trophy 2011
C/o Sourabh D Marathe
Immediate Past President, NASA India
201, Shivchaitanya, PI No 66,
Lokmanya Colony, Kothrud, Pune – 411038
Maharashtra
India

Contact no: +91-9869561113
E Mail: ipp.nasaindia@gmail.com

Eligibility

The competition is open to all student members of NASA in undergraduate of any NASA recognised school, college or institution of Architecture

The participants may be individuals or a group of not more than three, 3, students

The students shall do an online registration in one week in advance of the date of submission

Schedule

Last date for Registration - September 15, 2011, 18:00 hrs

Last date for Submission - October 31, 2011

Terms and Conditions

The entries will be sent and accepted in good faith, and NASA Council and B2B TROPHY Trophy Moderator, are in no way responsible or liable to the contents of any work, which is entirely the authors

The author / s will give a written declaration, to accompany entry, absolving the NASA Council and B2B TROPHY Trophy Moderator from any consequences arising out of these entries being published after the competition.

The author / s will give a written declaration stating that the work is the original work of the respective author, and will be solely responsible and liable in case the work has violated any copyrighted material, and if any matter is sourced from anywhere, due acknowledgement has to be given

The entries will adhere to the United Nations Declaration of Universal Human Rights, as set out in <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>, and will only contain strictly non controversial subject matter, in particular, will not under any circumstances, contain any references, terms, statements, claims, allegations, accusation, misrepresentations, misinformation, disinformation, abuse, of any race, language, class, society, community, creed, etc.

Any such entry violating this provision will be disqualified forthwith, and will put at risk further participation in NASA activities of the entire student delegation from which the said violator is part of

BACK TO BASICS TROPHY 2011

All decisions in this matter will be binding on all authors which would be at the final and sole discretion of the B2B TROPHY Moderator.

All entries will be the property of Anangpur Building Centre, and ASHRA, who will be free to utilise the same in any manner at any time, during or after the B2B TROPHY Competition 2011 period, and the original author will have no claim on the same after the entry is sent for the said competition.

Winners will be announced at the Valedictory Function of the 54th Annual NASA Convention.

Terms and conditions, and modalities are subject to change depending on circumstances

Decisions pertaining to the conduct of the B2B TROPHY Trophy remains with the Moderator