



# Reviving the history: Kayasthas in Hyderabad

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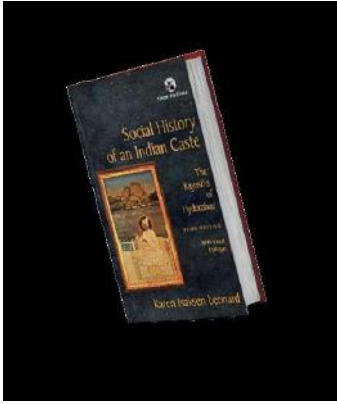
By Himajaa Indukuri

Express News Service

HYDERABAD: The auditorium at Vidyaranya High School, Saifabad was filled with history buffs, patrons and even those who just had immeasurable love for Hyderabad and its rich history as they gathered for the launch of the third edition of Karen Isaksen Lauren's book 'The Social History of an Indian caste'.

Karen's book revolves around the Hindu caste of Kayasthas especially those who migrated to Hyderabad. "The Kayasthas were a cluster of people who were scribes, keepers of records and administrators of the state for the state. Kayasthas claim to have directly descended from the

Hindu god Chitragupta, who is the keeper of people's fates in the court of Yama or the god of death.



He had 12 children from two wives and each of them started a different clan of Kayasthas that are currently spread across the country,” says Oudesh Rani Bawa, author and columnist.

The Kayasthas reportedly migrated to Hyderabad over a long period of time and became the trusted aides of the Nizams to look after their scribes and

records. “My curiosity for the various ethnic and cultural groups of India sparked off when I was studying history at the Miranda House, Delhi in 1961. I moved to Hyderabad after marrying the love of my life who was a scholar in Telugu. It was then that I started studying the history of Hyderabad and Nizams. I was intrigued to learn that an upper caste Hindu community called Kayasthas were the keepers of Nizam’s most revered documents and I set on to study more about it,” says 80-year-old author and anthropologist Karen Leonard.

Through a course of 55 years, Karen has extensively studied the history and culture of the former princely state of Hyderabad and published several literary works on the Muslim royalty and politics in Hyderabad. She has also done first-hand research about the Kayasthas and their occupational and matrimonial changes as they adapted to the political and economical changes of the region. “Hyderabad is rich in history and culture which is missing in today’s youth. It is also because most of the literary work is in Urdu and a majority of the city’s population does not know the language. There is great interest about history in the city and translating this literature into English will encourage more people to learn about their city,” says Sajjad Shahid, a patron of Hyderabad history and a visiting professor at the University of Hyderabad.