

Meeting of Mr Mujahid Makki with Astronaut Dr Harrison H. Schmitt

Pune the education capital of India has another facet to its popularity; as home to many past and present thinkers, philosophers, scientists, business tycoons and adventurers. It is also well known that in its labyrinthine alleyways and posh and simple homes reside great gems who once accomplished remarkable feats and pioneering works. One among them is Mujahid Makki who resides in Koregaon Park a plush suburb of Pune and who was once a 'blue eyed boy' of Wadia College. Mujahid along with his father and brother spent his early days in collecting and dealing in rocks and minerals of Maharashtra. He along with his brother Fasi Makki was also running a stone quarry in Pashan Pune during 70s , 80s and early 90s and finding spectacular specimens of Green Apophyllite there, a rare mineral which at that time was found only in Pashan Pune in the entire world. Therefore many Geo Scientists and Museum Curators from around the world used to visit his Pashan Quarry regularly to collect and acquire these rare minerals from Makki brothers. During one such visit of a professor from Harvard University and Curator of Smithsonian Institute Washington, it was decided that Mujahid will visit US and see the Geo Museums of both these places and advise them about what more new mineral specimens from India could be in the collection of these two prestigious World renowned Museums.

It so happened that preparations for launching of a series of Apollo Missions to Moon were in progress at that time and were being launched one after other. A manned Mission to Moon, Apollo 17 was being prepared to be launched. A well known Geologist of USA, Dr. Harrison Schmitt was to go to moon for geological exploration and study. Mujahid Makki contacted Dr. Harrison Schmitt and asked him about taking a small specimen of world famous Green Apophyllite from Pune to moon and to be left on moon. Dr. Schmitt agreed to this and yet said it is going to be subject to approval from NASA. After this Mujahid Makki sent him a beautiful small specimen of Green Apophyllite from Pashan Quarry to be taken to moon. The Apollo Mission was successfully accomplished and Dr. Schmitt along with other Astronauts returned to Earth with heaps of studied scientific data and lots of rock samples from moon. Upon enquiring Mujahid learnt from Dr. Schmitt that he could not take the Apophyllite specimen to moon due to weight restrictions of the missions. However overwhelmed by the gesture of Mujahid Makki, he was invited to NASA. Mujahid went to NASA and was taken around all



the important sight seeing places and monuments of NASA by the scientists there and then had a personal meeting with Dr. Harrison Schmitt . Who welcomed him and presented a signed photograph with many NASA Mementos. These still adorn the house of Mujahid Makki in Pune. Subsequently Mujahid went to US many times to represent India as the sole participant in a whistling competition there and many other countries. So it be known to all that Pune has many colourful great personalities living in this great city away from publicity who at one time were in brightest of limelight.

By- Fasi Makki