

Welcome to Chowmahalla Palace!

In the First Phase the Khilwat Darbar Hall was opened to the public in the year 2005 with its resplendent chandeliers, and the exhibitions of some of the Photographic and Textile Treasures of the Chowmahalla Palace Collection.

The Khilwat now has five new galleries:

(1) Silsila-e-Asafia (*The legacy of the House of Asafia*)

The exhibition focuses on the lives of the Nizams of the Asaf Jahi Dynasty, and their contributions to the State.

The gallery takes the visitor through times to a bygone era. Each wall of the gallery follows a chronological sequence highlighting the major contributions and events in the lives of the eight Nizams.

The visual display showcases several buildings that have withstood the passage of years and some of those that have not. There is a nostalgic array of palaces, gateways, bridges, hospitals, colleges and schools. Familiar landmarks can be spotted like the Osmania University, founded by the seventh Nizam and the still very much in use Afzal Gunj Bridge built by the fifth Nizam.

There are also some rare photographs of the long forgotten walls of Hyderabad Old City that were built by the first Nizam. There are photographs of the Palace of the second Nizam, the Panch Mahalla Palace that has disappeared from the heart of the old city, but whose name has been immortalized in the of the locality it once stood in.

(2) Mahallat

The next gallery is a photographic exhibition termed **Mahallat** in which visitors can study rare photographs, not seen anywhere else in the world, of the women of the Zenana, their singular costume and jewellery. As you progress through the gallery you will notice the changes that came with the introduction of western styles in furniture, clothes such as the dress and the sari, hairstyles and even photographic techniques.

(3) Seileh Khana:

The **Seileh Khana** is an extraordinary display of arms from the Chowmahalla Palace collection. Here you will see different types of decorated katars, swords, shields, even tortoise shell shields, bows and arrows, guns, and ornate gunpowder cases. There are ceremonial swords and executioners knives, complex penknives and exquisite crystal dagger handles.

(4) Taihniyat Mahal:

The first on the north side is **Taihniyat Mahal** that was once used for official audiences and receptions. It now houses the manuscripts and records of the palace that are being painstakingly and properly restored to aid future researchers who wish to work on this history of Hyderabad at the movement.

(5) Afzal Mahal

Afzal Mahal is the grandest of the four Mahals in this courtyard. From the photographs of 20th century we understand that it served as a venue for official banquets and receptions. The work on this Mahal is still in progress.

The **Aftab Mahal and Mehtab Mahal** on the eastern and western side of the grand central water tank and fountains have been converted into exhibition spaces to provide glimpses of the zenana and the Mardana or royal abode for the women and men.

Aftab Mahal contains an exhibition entitled **Tamanna-Reflections of the Royal Zenana**. This exhibition showcases some of Hyderabad's finest textiles and embroideries. The textiles of the Chowmahalla Palace collection are displayed in a tableau showing life in the Zenana: the joyous occasion of the birth of a child and the tender scene of a bride getting ready to leave her home in a beautiful palanquin or palki to start a new life in a new home. Located in the newly restored Aftab Mahal of the Chowmahalla Palace. This Exhibition reflects the lifestyle of the Zenana through three sections. The 'Birth of a child' was always an occasion for

celebration in the Zenana. The ladies came visiting to greet the mother and bless the newborn.

The other occasion that outshone the celebration of this was the 'Nikah' Marked by a unique spirit of flamboyance and joy de vivre, the festivities of the Nikah engulfed women of all ages as well as the children. The heavily bejeweled ladies were attired in the best of finery. The children were no exception.

Exhibited in these sections are select costumes from the Chowmahalla Palace collection. Some of these echo the late Mughal style that came to Deccan from the court workshops of northern and western Indian, other originated or passed through the craft ateliers of Hyderabad. These textiles are remarkable for their refined design and lavish materials. Their bold workmanship flaunts an unique vigour and style.

The Chowgoshla ensembles of chohs, kurtas, pyjamas and dupattas, displayed here, epitomize the typical Hyderabadi dressing style that became the hallmark costume of the Zerana since the 19th century. Distinctive workmanship is reflected in the peshwazes, a Mughal style moma's garment reportedly worn there by princesses as well.

By the middle of the second decade of the 1900s European influences began to permeate the lifestyle of the Zenana. Showcased in "nuances of the west" are the early traces of some of these.

The ladies took to wearing sarees in the terse, modern style, first adopted around the turn of the century in aristocratic Bengal, sofas and chairs brought new levels of comfort to seating. Tea became a beverage to enjoy everyday.

Mehtab Mahal has a series of rooms recreated with furniture and art objects to capture the life style of the palaces of the Nizams. The stately western Darbar stands in contrast to the eastern darbar with its grand takht and Mahimaratams (or fish standards used for processions and ceremonial occasions). There is a sample of a drawing and dining room, and the Study contains the table and the silver waiting equipment used by Nizam VI. This exhibition is appropriately entitled **Shaan-Glimpses of the lifestyle of the Nizams.**

The Chowmahalla's importance lies in Khilwat where the coronation and royal darbars and state receptions took place. For tourists, the restoration of Chowmahalla Palace, in the heart of the old city of Hyderabad and the 7 new galleries opened provide a glimpse of a bye-gone era that forms a part of the history of Hyderabad.

The lifestyle of the Nizam's of Hyderabad epitomized splendour in every conceivable manner. From spectacular architectural spaces to the finery of the smallest objects of daily use, everything of the Nizam's were redolent of their sartorial tastes and opulence.

This Exhibition, in the recently restored *Mehtab Mahal*, showcases glimpses of the splendour that characterized this lifestyle.

Period furniture and sparkling chandeliers from the collection of the Nizam's have been carefully restored and exhibited in the spaces here to evoke the essences of the era through impressionistic representations of the Indian style and western style darbars. The historically important Mahi-e-Maratibh, a unique Piscean standard bestowed upon the dynasty by the Mughal emperors, are artifacts of key interest in these Darbar settings.

Display of vintage photographs from the family collection are integrated with the ambiances of the simulated drawing room and the bedroom. Sensitively curretted decorative art objects lead an atmosphere of credence to the grandeur of the dining room.

The writing table and chair of the Sixth Nizam, items from his personal stationary a vintage typewriter with an Urdu keyboard and other such objects of interest in the recreated study.

Two beautifully carved howdahs (elephant seats), restored with industrious care, centerpieces of attraction in the main access corridor, stand sentinel to this abode of splendour.