

[https://doi.org/ 10.33472/AFJBS.6.9.2024.453-462](https://doi.org/10.33472/AFJBS.6.9.2024.453-462)



African Journal of Biological Sciences

Journal homepage: <http://www.afjbs.com>



Research Paper

Open Access

## THE PALACE OF THE NIZAM AND SAMASTHANA RAJAS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Article History

Volume 6, Issue 9, 2024

Received: 17 Mar 2024

Accepted : 12 Apr 2024

doi: 10.33472/AFJBS.6.9.2024.453-462

### ABSTRACT:

Hyderabad is the capital of Telangana. In 1948, after Police Action, Hyderabad joined the Indian Union. Before that it was the capital city of the Nizam's dominions which had fourteen Samasthana, which were the oldest members of Hyderabad's political milieu.

With *Diwan* (Prime Minister), *Paigah nawabs*, Samasthana Rajas and other nobles a composite court culture emerged in the Asaf Jahi period. It had various elements- of Hindu (south, west and north Indian), Islamic and also European practices. The Samasthana families added a lot of value to the court of Nizam.

In this paper the author is attempting to appreciate the commonalities and the differences of the Palaces of Samasthana Rajas and that of the Nizams. Samasthana Rajas find their lineage to Kakatiya and Vijayanagara rulers. By studying these palaces, exterior, interiors and as a complete historic complex, the author tries to understand the political linkages, the cultural exchanges and the architectural influence that had taken shape over a period of time. Studying the site plan of the palaces would also throw light on how the growth of the areas have happened in the last 100 years.

**Keywords:** Hyderabad, Samasthana, Nizam, Kakatiya, palaces, historic complex



*Figure 1 Notice the bastion, double storeyed gateway and horse-shoe arched door openings*

## **1.INTRODUCTION:**

The Nizam of Hyderabad was reinforced by Samasthana Rajas who provided him the fiscal, military and ceremonial support. JATPROLE SAMASTHANA was one of the fourteen Samasthanas in the Nizam's dominions- Gadwal, Wanaparthi, Jatprole, Palawancha (or Paloncha), Gurugunta, Dubbak, Domakonda, Sirnapalli, Amarchinta, Narayanapet, Gurugunta, Anegondi(now in Karnataka), Gopalpet, Rajapeta.

Kollapur is an area spanning the Nallamala Forest area on the banks of the river Krishna in Nagarkurnool district. The antiquity of this place can be traced up to II cen BC. Someswara, Sangameswara, and Malleswara temples are the well-known temples here. The Jatprole has an important legend behind its name.

As per the Ramayana, Sita was abducted by Asura Raavan. It was here when Jatayu Pakshi attacked Ravan to save Sita. Ravan counter attacked Jatayu, and the mighty bird fell on the ground. After Jatayu this place came to be known as Jatprole. It is Jatayu's dominion (prola means dominion). As per another legend this place is named after the matted hair of lord Shiva; *Jata* means matted hair, on the place where the bird fell, the Siva temple is built. There is a temple of Lord Jateswara.

The JatproleSamasthana<sup>i</sup> has their original fort in Jatprole, close to Madana Gopala Swamy Temple. Fort is little away from the temple. The fort dates back to 1000 years back. After the planning of Srisailem Dam a lot of historic structures suffered major damages and neglect. Because of backwaters the old fort<sup>ii</sup> of JatpoleSamsthana suffered major damages. It stands in the middle of the fields (the watershed area), that needs attention.

Sri Madana Gopala Swamy Temple (dated 16<sup>th</sup>cen 1527-29) by Raja Surabhi Madhava Rayalu suffered Islamic attacks, around five hundred years ago. The fort had a 1000-year-old inscription now kept in the Sri Madana Gopala Temple<sup>iii</sup> at new Jatprole.

Accessed from the main road leading to the palace is Sri Madhava Swamy Temple at Kollapur. It was built by Raja Surabhi Madhava Rayalu (Raja of Jatprole) during the 16<sup>th</sup> cen. on the left bank of River Krishna, at Manchalakatta village. It was rebuilt in Kollapur during (1986-89) with components salvaged from river site when original temple was submerged. It is noted that some 107 villages<sup>iv</sup> submerged under the waters of Srisailem Dam.

As one crosses the temple, to the left side of the road the palace boundary wall is seen in between the shops. Towards the end, this road turns to the left, the bastions and the double storied gateway is very much visible on this road. The double storied gateway is the copy of Kasi maharaja's palace gateway.

Further down the road is the district court. The original building once stood here was given by the family of Raja of Kollapur. On the same grounds stand a new court complex at present.



*Figure 2 Pavilion meant for ringing the bell (see the right-side structure)*

The present Kollapur Palace, influenced by German architecture, is located in the centre of the village. A large walled complex with four bastions is accessed by a huge two-storied gatehouse. Opposite to the gatehouse to the right is the small pavilion that housed a ghanta/ bell. This acted like a clock for the villages located around the palace. The bell was struck at every hour. At 12:00 noon, it was struck 12 times and at midnight 12:00 it was struck 24 times in order to declare starting of a new day. *Naubat-nagara* (shehnai and drum) was also played along with the bell, as the drum beaters sat in the arched window.



Figure 3 Notice Gajalakshmi motif

The gatehouse welcomes the visitor with a Gaja-Lakshmi (Goddess of prosperity Lakshmi surrounded by two elephants on either sides) motif in the centre. As the visitor enters the gate, one is surprised by the scale of the palace. The right side of the palace has a huge garden. In the middle of which is a statue of Raja Venkata Lakshma Rao, casted the early 1930's at Madras (presently called Chennai). This statute had four lions at the base of it, the one to the left and two at the back, total three are missing.

The Raja stands as a life-size statue, raised on a plinth and protected by an ornate gazebo. He wears a turban, a long coat with tight pyjamas. Wearing English lace-up shoes, he sports a sword. On the plinth are his birth, ruling, and death dates carved in the languages that surrounded him: Telugu, Urdu, English and farsi. This statue memorializes one of Hyderabad State's leaders. Raja was very futuristic in his ideas he designed Kollapur with broad roads the futuristic townplanning in 1916 with 100 feet road and surrounding tree plantations. Appreciating the planning of the region people used to refer to Kollapur as Telangana's Mysore (comparing it with the erstwhile royal city of Mysore). Dasara was an important festival as was celebrated at a grand scale similar to Mysore's festivities. It reflects the composite culture, an inevitable part of the erstwhile state of Hyderabad. To the right end of the complex is a historic circular well. There is a *gaushala* (cowshed) here. The right side and the left side wall have smaller wooden doors meant for daily movement of the public. The arched-way to the left had grain storage in the past. People were donated grains during famines from here.

The circular staircase to the left and right side takes the visitor to the first floor. The entrance floor in front has some rooms meant for office work. On the first floor the visitor enters a covered balcony with a doorway entering a huge hall, which functioned as the Durbar Hall. The hall is filled with antiquities. The plan is symmetrical with apartments to the left and right. There is an entry to the second floor too.

The doors and windows of the palace are stained glass and coloured glass. On a few door-panels glass etching is noticed there.

## 2.PALACE OF THE NIZAM:

Chowmahalla, 'chow' is four and 'mahalla' refers to a group of palaces. Hence Chowmahalla, means a group of four palaces, functioned as the seat of the Asaf Jahi dynasty till 1948. It had many components out of which some are lost. The idea of this palace complex was born during the period of Salarjung. Yet most of the structures belong to the fifth Nizam's period.



The site plan of Chowmahalla from 1913 base map displays the Jilukhana gate (to the north) as the main entrance with the Naubatkhana- the two pavilions for the drum beaters to sit in. *Jilukhana* is the staging courtyard- *jilu* means to congregate. Jilukhana gate roof in the central part is similar to the Mughal period structures. On the northern side is a road that connects this palace entrance to Charminar (the Qutb Shahi period four-sided gateway). After entering the *Jilukhana* the visitor would be at *Aiwan-e-Aali*, the royal secretariat. Then comes another magnificent doorway- *Darwaza* with a smaller opening- *khirki*(door with a postern). Entering through this door is the main courtyard. Right in front (to the west) is the Shahi KhilwatKhana which is flanked by a series of rooms meant for the ministers of the Nizam. There is a structure on each side of the Khilwat Mubarak palace: Sise Adalat on the western side and Bara Imam on the eastern side.

There are two more gateways one is called *Pili Phatak*, the yellow gate (accessed from the west side) and the other one, accessed from the same road further down is closed at present It is a huge gate with a clock tower, facing the road(.to east side) opposite theKhilwat ground.

*Aiwan-e-Ali*<sup>v</sup> functioned as an integral part of the Chowmahalla. It was used as the Diwan-Khane-e-Aliya or the office of the Sarf-e-Khas (Privy Purse) till 1948. As many of the scholars suggest *Aiwan-e-Ali*<sup>vi</sup> was constructed with the other structures of the Chowmahalla in the period of the second Nizam. The palaces are designed around central garden with an elongated water body in the centre called *houz*. This allows cool breezes to flow in all the apartments till date. The doors and windows made of wood of the residential blocks are tastefully done. A wide band of Deccani lime plaster runs around all the openings.

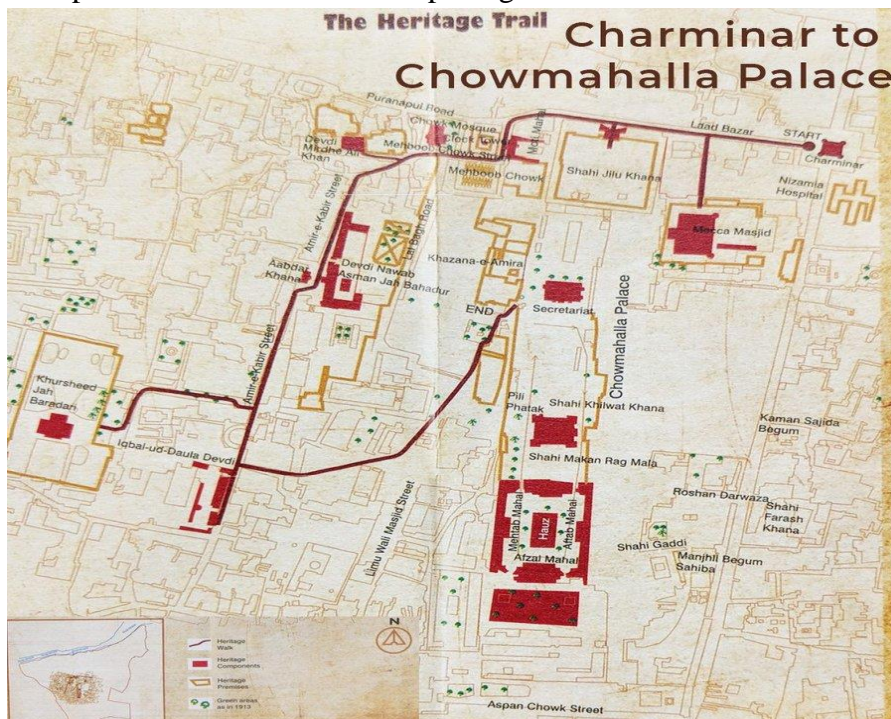


Figure 4 Map of Hyderabad Heritage Walk 1, notice the Chowmahalla, Source- Telangana Tourism Heritage Walks

The main palace is functioning as the Museum. The structure has a façade of five multi-cusped arches in front and is accessed by a flight of steps added recently. It has two big halls now used for functions. On the wall of the hall, there are pointed arched-niches perpendicular to the multi-cusped arch panel.

The construction of the main palace of the Nizam was started in 1750 by Salabat Jung II, the successor of the Nizam-ul-Mulk. As the name suggests, Chowmahalla a complex of palaces, all of them are clustered around a courtyard. Each one of the four palaces was meant for a different function. The south palace Afzal Mahal was meant to receive dignitaries, and the structure in the west. It is believed to be a copy of the Shah's palace in Tehran. The eastern palace housed the office of the Nizam.

*Though the complex was built over a period of time, the structures display a remarkable unity of design. The palace complex was once spread over nearly one-fifth of the entire walled city area, bounded on all four sides by the Laad Bazaar Road, the Aspan Chowk Road, the Panjmahalla Road and the Shah Gunj; the area of the complex has now dwindled to around 12.7 acres. At the end of the courtyard, there are two smaller, symmetrically placed gateways on either side of the Khilwat Mubarak; these lead to the second courtyard which has several palaces: Afzal Mahal in the south, Aftab Mahal in the east, Mehtab Mahal opposite the Aftab Mahal, Tahniyat Mahal opposite the Afzal Mahal, and the Chaman Bangla in the south-east corner. There are a few more structures on either side of the Aftab Mahal and Mehtab Mahal used as stores. (Ref- Vottery M, A GUIDE TO THE HERITAGE OF HYDERABAD: THE NATURAL AND THE BUILT, Rupa and Co New Delhi 2010 )*

### **3.ANALYSIS:**

After learning about both the palaces, the similar features and dissimilarities can be listed out.

#### **3.1 SIMILARITIES:**

Both the palaces belong to royal families, one to the Hindu with more ancient lineage. The other one belongs to the Nizam, the Islamic ruler.

Both palaces are in the prime areas today. The localities grew around them.

Both the palaces were ahead of its time, Kollapur palace have German architecture and Chowmahalla has Persian, Turkish and Rajasthani with British Architecture. The court functioned following the Mughal systems of court.

The lime plaster work on walls, columns, beams, ceiling has been a common building craft in both the palaces.





Figure 5 Crockery collection at Chowmahalla, notice the yellow set. Use of yellow colour was allowed only for the Royal family



Figure 6 Notice the metal railing and the vase as an important component from European Architecture



Figure 7 The lifestyle of Nizam, influenced by the British. A picture from Chowmahalla

Both the palaces have cast iron rainwater pipes, cars, chandeliers, crockery etc imported from western countries.



*Figure 8 use of natural material to cover the openings is observed in both the palaces also at Domakonda Fort, a very local effort to cool the palace. Picture clicked at Chowmahalla, Afzal Mahal*



*Figure 9 Notice the elements in parapet wall, influenced by the European architecture. Similar elements are observed at parapet walls of Chowmahalla. The columns and arches show Rajasthani elements- a beautiful, seamless blend...*



### 3.2 Dissimilarities:



*Figure 10 Horse-shoe shaped arch, rose-window, coloured glass windows. The hanging lamps are observed at Chowmahalla too.*

The Kollapur palace have used coloured glass and glass etching in doors and windows. Chowmahalla does not have coloured glass doors and windows.

The Kollapur palaces have used religious subjects (Radha-Krishna) and mythical animal (Yaali/Vyala) in moulding near the ceiling, Chowmahalla has only vegetal ornamentation.

Athangudi tiles are noticed in floor at Kollapur Palace and the Corinthian column has new feature-torso of the Indian fairies (at Vijay mahal). The Kollapur palace has a lot of architectural features that strongly suggest the vernacular architecture of southern India.

### 4.CONCLUSION:

The palaces of Telangana have a lot of potential for Cultural Tourism. The success case of Chowmahalla, that has been restored and put to reuse with the efforts of the Nizam's trust and lots of individuals and professionals, is worth a detail study. It has been the pride of Hyderabad, with UNESCO recognition in 2013. It has paved a way for many other restoration schemes for the monuments of the city, giving them a new lease of life.

Domakonda fort received UNESCO Asia pacific Award in 2023 is a great example of sustainable practices.

The State Govt of Telangana must work with owners of Samasthana palaces spread across the region and give various tax benefits in order to encourage the restoration schemes.

<sup>i</sup> The ancestors of Raja Jatprole were called *Sthapanachari* as they helped Rani Rudramma, daughter of Raja Ganapatideva to acquire the throne.

<sup>ii</sup>The Fort, Madana Gopala Swamy temple, Agastheeswara Temple, Singavatam and Somasila all together should a part of the Tourism management plan of Nagar Kurnool district.

<sup>iii</sup>They depict the Vijaynagara style of architecture.

<sup>iv</sup>Different sources quote different number, like 96, 102 villages also.

<sup>v</sup> The connection between Shahi Kahazana, Aiwan-e-Ali and Khilwat is lost at present.

<sup>vi</sup> It was the seat of royal culture then, and people had to observe various formalities when entering its premises. But now, there is a wall separating it from the rest of the palace complex. This heritage structure is being used as a function hall and the heritage site hides behind the modern use.

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