

## SALARJUNG MUSEUM

Situated on the southern bank of the river Musi, the Salarjung Museum is the third largest museum in India housing the biggest one-man collections of antiques in the world. It is well known throughout India for its prized collections belonging to different civilizations dating back to the 1st century. Nawab Mir Yousuf Ali Khan Salar Jung III (1889-1949), former Prime Minister of the seventh Nizam of Hyderabad, spent a substantial amount of his income over thirty five years to make this priceless collection, his



life's passion. The collections left behind in his ancestral palace, 'Diwan Deodi' were formerly exhibited there as a private museum which was inaugurated by Jawaharlal Nehru in 1951. Later in 1968, the museum shifted to its present location at Afzalgunj and is administered by a Board of Trustees with the Governor of Andhra Pradesh as ex-officio chairperson under the Salar Jung Museum Act of 1961.

Salar Jung museum is the fantasy of an art visionary come to life which waited for its consummation for another great lover of art Jawaharlal Nehru to visit the historic city of the Quli Qutab Shahs and inaugurate it on 16 December, 1951 when the collections were hurriedly assorted and housed in Diwan Devdi, residence of the Salar Jung. Every year a million visitors pay homage to this great repository of art and history. The priceless collections were moved in 1968 to a new site from the 100-year-old palace Dewan

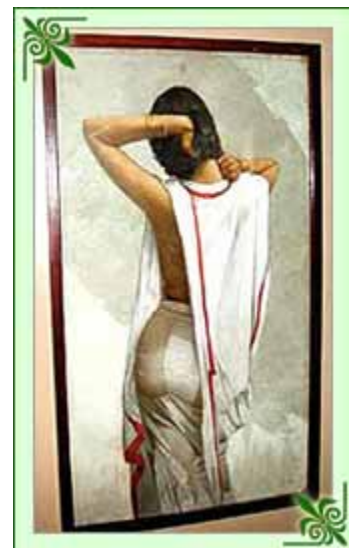


Devdi of the prime ministers. Legend has that the museum houses art collections of three generations of the Salar Jung family, beginning with Salar Jung, who was prime minister under...



The incomparable treasures of the museum, consisting only of a part of the original collection, are an amazing amalgam of antiquity and modernity, the three Salar Jungscouring continents for objets d'art and returning home with shiploads

of artefacts. It is believed that during the colonial period a lot of the art wealth of the country was shipped to the metropolitan countries and the Salar Jung are credited with bringing back some of it to enrich the collection. The museum represents, in popular belief, the largest one-man collections of the world. They reflect the stunning range of time and place of these treasures, some of them belonging to different civilisations and dating back to the first century and retrieved from nearly every nook and corner of the world. However, the chief architect of this great and magnificent congeries of art is believed to be Salar Jung III, i.e. Nawab Mir Yusuf Ali Khan.

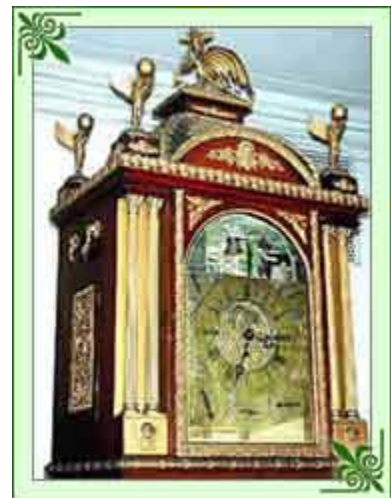


The museum is home to 43,000 art exhibits and 50,000 books collected from all over the world. Old timers believe that the present collection constitutes only half of the original art wealth amassed by Salar Jung III. His employees siphoned off part of it, since Salar Jung was a bachelor and depended upon his staff to keep a vigil. Some more art pieces were lost or stolen during the shifting of the museum from Dewan Devdi to the present site. The museum, declared an institution of national importance by an Act of Parliament in 1961, overlooks another landmark, the languid Musi, of the four hundred-year-old city founded by Mohammed Quli Qutub Shah. This great treasure trove is a tribute to man's eternal quest for beauty and elegance, particularly India's remarkable cultural diversity and heritage.



The marvellous expose unveils the art heritage of India, Asia, Middle East and Europe and includes Persian carpets, Chinese porcelain, Japanese lacquer ware, sculpture, invaluable collections of jade, bronzes, enamelware, paintings, wood and inlay work from Tibet, Nepal and Thailand etc. There are Aurangzeb's sword, daggers belonging to empress Noor Jehan, emperors Jehangir and Shah Jehan, the turbans and chair of Tippu Sultan, furniture from Egypt, paintings etc. Among the sculptures stands out the world famous statue of Veiled Rebecca, her beautiful face hazily visible through; hold your breath, a marble but gossamer veil. The visitor may mistake it for a gorgeous woman draped in a wet garment. Equally captivating is a double-figure wood sculpture done by G.H. Benzoni, an Italian sculptor, in 1876. It stands before a mirror and shows the facade of a nonchalant Mephistopheles and the image of a demure Margareta in the mirror.

A bewildering variety and array of clocks greets the visitor in the clock room. Seen are the ancient Sandiaers in the form of obelisks to huge and modern clocks of the twentieth century. Others in the range vary from miniature clocks which need a magnifying glass to imbibe their beauty and complexity to stately grandfather clocks from as far away as France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and Britain. A visual delight is the musical clock Salar Jung bought from Cook and Kelvy of England, a virtual mechanical marvel. Every hour, a timekeeper emerges from the upper deck of the clock to strike a gong as many times as it is



Other attractions are a gallery exclusively devoted to the celebrated family of the Salar Jungs, a children's section, a reference library and a section devoted to rare and ancient Arabic Urdu and Persian manuscripts, including a handwritten miniature Qoran. On display are unique mementos like the panegyric in Urdu presented to Sir Salar Jung and Nizam VI in memory of their visit to Delhi to witness the Imperial Proclamation of Queen Victoria in 1877. The first room houses the personal items of the Salar Jung household such as various mementoes received by the Salar Jungs, embroidered sherwanis and a commodious and arresting masnad (ceremonial throne-like chair used by Salar Jung III). In the room, you can also see a large

portrait of Mir Yousuf Khan, the clothes of the nobility, their books and furniture and bric-a-brac.

Walking through the museum is walking through the civilisations, Indus, Egyptian, Mesopotamian, name a few and is bound to disengage the visitor present, the current and the immediate and a world he is familiar with only through reading. your trek through the endless halls, rooms, galleries the museum, you are in a daze.



ages of several Roman to from the transport him to Throughout and corridors of

Stunning is the jade room or gallery hosting items delicateness and elegance of jade, which is not found in India and believed to have been introduced during the Mughal rule. Though the stone is imported, the articles of jade on display in the gallery were all the handiwork of Indian artists. Jade, soft and lucent, was carved into handles for small daggers studded with precious stones and inlay work. A jade wine bowl you can see here is a thing

articulating the



of beauty, dainty and transparent. Also striking are the wine cups made of jade with leaf and flower motifs. You can also see small and cute jade platters which at one time adorned the dining tables of the Salar Jungs. The jade collection also includes a jade stand of Altamash (1209-10 A.D); fruit knife of Mughal empress Noorjehan (17th century); hunting knife of emperor Jehangir; an inscribed archery ring of emperor Shah Jehan done in dark green jade (17th century).

The textile gallery is a depository of Indian textile art in cotton, silk and wool, dominated by a collection of brocades woven with silver and gold thread and the world-famous Kashmiri shawls. Gold and zari add to the value of the embroidery, which showcases also phulkari embroidery work from Punjab. An entire rich and

brick-coloured cotton expanse disappears behind a fine façade of intricately woven silk thread in a burst of colours.



You can also see glassware from England, Austria, Ireland, France, Belgium, Czechoslovakia and Turkey besides glassware belonging to Ming and Ching periods.



Manuscripts on show include the great Arabic Al Quran in Nashq done by Yakut-al-Must'sami bearing the autographs of Moghul emperors, Jehangir, Shahjehan and Aurangzeb; Roudat-ul-Muhabbin by Amir Hussaini Saadat (1379 A.D.); Urdu poetic composition Diwan-e-Mohamed Quli Qutub Shah (1595 A.D.) done by Quli Qutub Shah himself acquired from the Golconda Royal Library.



There is the Ivory Room resplendent with intricately carved items and articles among which worthy of mention are chess sets, statuettes, painted objects done by using the cutaway technique. About the technique an article appearing in the Hindustan Times says, "Here the ivory is first carved with a lacy surface design. The space behind it is cut away till the design shows up like a screen. And further carving continues at deeper levels of the ivory. The object then acquires a trellis-like case and the forms within forms are created out of a single piece of ivory."



Every form of art in its ancient glory finds its representation in the museum. Statuary includes a standing Buddha image of limestone from Nelakondapalli (2nd or 3rd century A.D.); Mukhalinga from Kausambi (4th or 5th century A.D.); Ananthasayi Vishnu with his ten avatars carved on top (12th century A.D., Kakatiyaa, Warangal); Jain, Buddhist and Hindu bronzes dating back to later Pallava and Chola periods and the two most famous exhibits of the museum – the Veiled Rebecca and a sycamore wood carving portraying a double statue of Mephistopheles and Margaretta. The mammoth collection includes paintings such as "Soap Bubbles" by Fransesco Hayez of Italy; "Piazzo of San Marco" by Antonio Canaletto (1697-1768) and "Venice" by Marc Aldine of Italy. Pottery items range from Dresden (Germany), Sevres (France), Capodimonte (Italy) to Wedgewood and English porcelain.

The museum building in a semicircular shape with 38 galleries spread on two floors displays only a part of the original collections. The ground floor has 20 galleries and the first floor has 18 galleries. The exhibits on different subjects are displayed in separate galleries.

**Gallery 1** or the Founders gallery displays personal artifacts, momentos received and portraits of the Salar Jungs and the Nizams's. Royal clothes, porcelain and silver bowls, books furniture like the ceremonial throne used by Salar Jung III etc can be seen.

**Gallery 3 and 3A** contains collection of Indian art and articles. This section displays Indian textiles; bronze images of Jain, Buddhist and Hindu deities dating back to later Pallava and Chola periods; Stone sculptures including a Bharhut rail slab, standing Buddha statue, Ananthasayi Vishnu, red stone sculptures of Kushanas etc; brass idols belonging to the Pallavas, Cholas and Kakatiyas dynasty and brass articles belonging to Vijanagar dynasty; Pancha Teertha Jaina statue, statues of Somaskadha, Shiva and Nataraja in Ananda Tandava posture, Narasimha, Ganesha etc.; Kalamkari paintings on cloth has various scenes of Ramayana, 'Parvati Kalyanam', Lord Krishna along with Gopis etc.



**Gallery 4 and 5** contains minor arts of South India and wood carvings. The special attraction is the armed Vishnu of 1st and 2nd centuries found in Nagarjuna hill. Other exhibits here include wooden chairs, doors, statue of gods, carved screens, chariot wheels etc. There is also a brass carving of 'Rama Pattabhishekam' from Thailand.

**Gallery 6** presents a fine selection of printed and embroidered fabrics in cotton, silk and wool belonging to Indian culture. Brocades woven with silver and gold thread, silk saris of south India, Kashmiri shawls, muslin waistcloth, famous 'phulkari' embroidery work from Punjab, appliqué temple hangings from Rajasthan, Zari coats, chicken work from Lucknow etc. are displayed here.

**Gallery 9,10 and 11** is the Children's section and has a marvelous assemblage of toys from all over the world. It displays puppets, model trains and objects acquired by Salar Jung III during his childhood.

**Gallery 12** is a very shallow porch with stags, deer etc in glass cabinets.

**Gallery 14** contains carved ivory works belonging to 18th and 19th century. Ivory chairs presented to Tippu Sultan by Louis XV of France, inlaid tables, early 20th century German circus figures, chess sets, mat with ivory thread, lantern from Mysore etc some of the exhibits. The Mughal Queen in the standing posture is the special attraction of this gallery.

**Gallery 15 and 16** contains metal ware and European artifacts including the world famous statue of Veiled Rebecca, her beautiful face hazily visible through a flimsy marble veil. Another equally famous sculpture is a 19th century double-figure sycamore wood carving done by G.H Benzoni, an Italian sculptor. The front view of the figure shows the facade of Mephistopheles and the back view of the figure showing Margareta is seen reflected in the mirror placed behind. There are the two of the most famous attractions of the museum.

**Gallery 16A** includes guns, daggers, shields and swords including that of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, Tippu Sultan, Mohammad Shah and from the Qutb Shahi period with engravings of the Dasavatara etc.

**Gallery 17** is dedicated to ornately decorated metal ware like huqqa, trays etc. Gallery 17A contains oil paintings by Ravi Verma and Abanindranath tagore.

**Gallery 18** shows a representative selection of Indian miniatures like Mughal, Rajasthani, Pahari and Deccani paintings.

**Gallery 20** on the first floor has a collection of European paintings. The vast collection includes 'Piazzo of San Marco' by Antonio Canaletto (1697-1768), 'Soap Bubbles' by Fransesco Hayez of Italy, 19th century work, 'Venice' by Marc Aldine of Italy etc.

**Gallery 21 to 24** is the large assemblage of European pottery, furniture, bronzes and glassware. Pottery items range from Dresden (Germany), Sevres (France), Capodimonte (Italy) to Wedgwood and English porcelain. **Gallery 24** has glass ware exhibits from England, Austria, Ireland, Venice, France, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Turkey etc

**Gallery 25**, the jade room displays stunning exhibits of jade. Jade imported from abroad were carved intricately and inlaid with stones by Indian artists. The workmanship can be seen in the dainty jade wine bowl, wine cups with leaf and flower motifs, swords, small jade platters used by the Salarjungs and inscribed jade book stand of Altamash (1209-10 AD), hunting knife of Mughal Emperor Jahangir, fruit knife of Mughal Empress Noorjehan (17th century), 17th century dark green jade inscribed archery ring of Mughal emperor Shah Jehan etc.



**Gallery 28** is the clock room is one of the best galleries displaying more than 300 clocks in various sizes ranging from Sandiers to modern day huge pieces. There are tiny pieces set in magnifying glasses to huge and stately grandfather clocks from France, England, Germany, Italy and Switzerland. An interesting exhibit here is a musical clock from Cook and Kelvy of England with a toy figure of a watchman, who pushes open the door every hour in a great hurry, to beat the melodious gong to indicate time.

**Gallery 29** holds the ancient and rare collection of manuscripts in Arabic, Urdu and Persian languages. It includes the great Arabic Al Quran in Nashq (1288 AD) done by calligrapher Yakut-al-Must'sami bearing the autographs of Mughal emperors, Jehangir, Shahjehan and Aurangzeb; Roudat-ul-Muhabbin by Amir Hussain Saadat (1329 A.D.); Urdu poetic composition Diwan-e-Mohamed Quli Qutub Shah (1595 A.D.) done by Quli Qutub Shah himself acquired from the Golconda Royal Library etc.

**Gallery 31 to 36** contains far east -Chinese and Japanese porcelain. The display includes pieces from Sung (960-70); Yuan(1279-1365) Ming and Ching periods in gallery 31.

**Gallery 32** is the Kashmiri room with arts and crafts from Kashmir.

In short, the museum is a standing monument to the artistic genius of mankind throughout the space-time spectrum.

(Article from <http://7wondersofhyderabad.com> and <http://www.webindia123.com/monuments/museums/salarjung.htm>)