



**KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY**  
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# Char Kaman Restoration: Conservation of Hyderabad's Historic Qutb Shahi Gateways

Published On: 10-07-2026

## Recent Developments:

- **The Government of Telangana** has approved the restoration of the **Char Kaman**, the four monumental gateways surrounding **Charminar** in **Hyderabad**.
- Administrative sanction has been accorded for **inviting tenders, appointing conservation consultants and preparing restoration works** aimed at preserving the heritage structures while maintaining their original architectural character.

## About Char Kaman:

- **Char Kaman** literally means "**Four Gateways**" and comprises **four monumental ceremonial arches** constructed around the **Charminar** as part of the planned urban layout of the historic city of Hyderabad.
- The complex was developed as a **public square and royal ceremonial precinct**, forming the entrance to the **Qutb Shahi Palace Complex**, with **Dad Mahal** situated within the enclosed area.
- The square was designed according to the principles of **Persian-inspired urban planning**, integrating administrative, ceremonial and public spaces into a unified city layout.

## *Location and Layout:*

- The four gateways surround the historic **Gulzar Houz**, also known as **Char-Su-Ka-Houz**, which originally served as a **freshwater fountain** located at the centre of the square.
- The four gateways are arranged in the four cardinal directions:
- **East: Kali Kaman**
- **West: Sher-e-Batil Kaman**
- **North: Machili Kaman**
- **South: Charminar Kaman**
- Each gateway was constructed with **three storeys**, containing chambers that originally accommodated **royal guards** and security personnel.

## Historical Background:

### *Construction and Patronage:*

- **Charminar** was constructed between **1589** and **1591** by **Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah**, the **fifth ruler of the Qutb Shahi Dynasty**.
- The **Char Kaman** gateways were constructed around **1594**, shortly after the completion of the Charminar, as part of Hyderabad's original city plan.
- The city planning and architectural design are widely attributed to the Persian scholar and architect **Mir Momin Astarabadi**, who introduced Persian urban planning concepts into Hyderabad.

### *Original Nomenclature:*

**Kamaraj IAS Academy**

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- The gateways originally possessed ceremonial names reflecting their administrative functions:
- **West Gateway: Daulat Khana-e-Ali**, meaning **Gateway of the Royal Residence**.
- **East Gateway: Naqqar Khana**, meaning **Gateway of the Royal Drum House**.
- The enclosed central ceremonial space was known as **JilaKhana**, which functioned as the **Royal Vestibule** before entry into the royal palace complex.

### *Present-Day Names and Origin:*

- **Machili Kaman** derived its name from the ceremonial tradition of suspending a large decorative fish made of bamboo and paper during the **lunar new year**.
- **Kali Kaman** literally means the **Black Gateway**.
- **Sher-e-Batil Kaman** is interpreted as the **Gateway of the Lion-hearted** or **Destroyer of Evil Magic**.
- **Charminar Kaman** derives its name from its location directly facing the Charminar.
- These names continue to remain in popular use across Hyderabad.

### Administrative and Cultural Significance:

#### *Role during the Qutb Shahi Period:*

- The gateways marked the **principal entrances to the old city of Hyderabad** and served as ceremonial access points to the royal palace complex.
- The surrounding buildings accommodated **nobles, officials and royal attendants** before they proceeded for audiences with the ruler.
- The central square functioned as an important **administrative, ceremonial and public gathering space** during the Qutb Shahi period.
- The palace complex situated near the western gateway has disappeared over time, although the gateways continue to preserve the historical urban layout.

### Architectural Features:

#### *Architectural Characteristics:*

- The gateways represent the **Indo-Islamic architectural style** with strong **Persian influences**.
- The structures exhibit **symmetrical planning, monumental arches, lime-mortar construction, ornamental stucco work and ceremonial proportions**.
- The entire complex reflects the concept of **planned medieval urban development**, integrating civic spaces, royal architecture and commercial activity within a single framework.

### Restoration Project:

#### *Major Components:*

- Restoration will include:
- **Structural strengthening, conservation of architectural features, repair of damaged masonry, preservation of decorative elements and scientific heritage conservation.**
- Conservation activities aim to preserve the **historical authenticity** of the monuments while improving their structural stability.
- Consultants will prepare conservation plans before execution through the tendering process.

#### *Need for Restoration:*

- Continuous **urbanisation, pollution, weathering, traffic vibration and ageing of construction materials** have weakened several portions of the gateways.
- Heritage experts have repeatedly recommended **scientific conservation** to prevent irreversible deterioration.

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- The restoration is expected to improve **heritage tourism, public safety and long-term preservation** of Hyderabad's historic urban landscape.

### Significance for UPSC:

#### *Cultural and Heritage Importance:*

- The **Char Kaman** represents the planned urban vision of the **Qutb Shahi Dynasty**.
- The complex illustrates the synthesis of **Persian and Deccani architectural traditions**.
- The monument contributes to the preservation of India's **urban cultural heritage** and strengthens Hyderabad's identity as a historic city.
- Conservation supports **sustainable heritage management**, cultural tourism and local economic development.
- Restoration aligns with the broader objective of protecting monuments against **urban encroachment, pollution and environmental degradation**.

#### *Challenges:*

- Rapid **urban expansion** has increased pressure on heritage structures.
- **Air pollution, vibrations from vehicular traffic, unauthorised constructions and inadequate maintenance** continue to threaten structural stability.
- Conservation requires balancing **heritage protection, urban development and public accessibility**.

### Value Addition for UPSC:

#### *Important Heritage Conservation Institutions:*

- **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)**
- **Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH)**
- **Quli Qutb Shah Urban Development Authority (QQSUDA)**
- **Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA)**

#### *Related Constitutional Provisions:*

- **Article 49:** Obligation of the State to protect monuments and places of national importance.
- **Article 51A(f):** Fundamental Duty to preserve the rich heritage of India's composite culture.

#### *Important Legislations:*

- **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958**
- **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (Amendment) Act, 2010**