

Lucknow: a wonder of the golden days

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Synopsis: *It is a short review on the rich socio-historical and cultural Nawabi heritage of Lucknow, which is an attempt to cover a few wonders of the Owadh by the writer. The city of Lucknow has been given various other historical names too to interpret its value, such as "The Constantinople of India", "Shiraz e Hind" and "The Golden City of the East" because of its marvels. Lucknow is a large city in northern India which is also a hub of Shia and Sunni Ulama of high repute. Alas! It was looted and destroyed by the cruel and brutal British Empire. Thanks to the veteran writers and the successors of the custodian of the lost heritage, today we know something about it.*

1. A Wonderful Cultural Hub:

When we talk about Lucknow, India, our mind converges towards its glorious culture and magnificent civilization, promoted by the Nawabs. Lucknow, a city in Northern India on the banks of Gomti, is a shining star and pride of its ethnicity, tradition, sweet language, courtesy, friendliness, religious tolerance and harmony. Even today, a boat rides in the Gomti River which provides a glance of the Nawabi grandeur of Lucknow. With its magnificent palaces, splendid gardens, resplendent houses and impressive architecture, one can witness the majesty of the city and imagine its glory during the Nawabi era. Prominence of Lucknow as a center of Muslim cultural hub came after the decline of the Mughal power in the second half of the 18th century. Nawab Asifuddaulah shifted his seat from Faizabad to Lucknow for certain reasons. He was a benevolent ruler — for whom the following idiom was common among his non Muslim population:

"Jisko Na Day Maula, Usko Day Asifuddaulah"

Those ignored by Allah, will be taken care of by Asafuddaulah.

In its name "Lucknow", one can find hundred thousand diversities in this society. When it comes to Eastern civilization and culture, Iran has lead for centuries. This is relevant as the civilization of Lucknow was enriched by the Iranians, who migrated to Lucknow in search of prosperity and made it their home. The city has been given various other names too, such as The Constantinople of India, Shirazi-Hind and the Golden City of the East.

2. Nawab: Patron of Intellectuals:

Even as the Mughal influence declined, the city of Lucknow was flourishing with the peace and prosperity under the command of Nawabs. It was Nawab Wajid Ali Shah Akhtar who created a galaxy which dazzled the eyes of observers and patronized unique intellectuals of each field. Like his ancestors, the Nawab was a scholar of Arabi, Farsi and other languages. Many don't know that the emperor of Owadh has written sixty two voluminous books, without the help of any ghost writer. The topics of each book have high academic value. He had also composed more than 100 Marasi, apart from a number of poems. It is a matter of fact that art and crafts had reached its zenith in Lucknow. Wajid Ali Shah followed the same policy - which was designed by Tipu Sultan - to kick out the cruel invaders of the East India Company from India. He recruited youngsters from the surroundings of Owadh in large numbers, and sent them to his military academy under the watchful eyes of the French military officers who had been employed for training. He himself punctually attended the army drill early in the morning, in uniform. However, his associates betrayed him. Alarmed and sensing danger, the foxes of East India Company understood that Owadh's power was a great danger for their survival in India; therefore, they annexed Owadh by force prior to their attack on Delhi. The British painted a portrait of Nawab with malafide intentions to make legal their military invasion of Lucknow. Indian touts also supported their white masters; therefore, a number of writers used their pen with prejudice to present the Eastern nobility in nasty face, with poor light. The alleged corruption of its rulers became an excuse for taking over Owadh, the most prosperous region of India at that time. Loot by the East India Company which was sent to England is an eye-opener; a lot of it was kept by the company officials for personal gain.

It was the British and their touts who painted an ugly picture, and created concocted stories about the Allah fearing emperor of Owadh. The Nawab spent his remaining life in Matya Burj, Kolkata, in exile with great patience. The Nawab although in exile made all possible efforts to preserve the glorious tradition of Lucknow at Matya Burj and contributed a lot to secure the literary heritage and off course the Urdu language. As mentioned above, Wajid Ali Shah was a gifted poet and wrote under the pen name Akhtar. This is one of the verses of Wajid Ali Shah, which he composed in prison:

***“Choor Ghar Lutay, Shah Bandha Jaey;
Meri Pabandi Ki Hay Yeh Surat”***

*Thieves have plundered my house and arrested the King;
This is the condition of my detention.*

When the Nawab was exiled from Lucknow to Matia Burj, Calcutta, he had composed the following famous Geet:

“Babul Mora Naihar Chhuto Hi Jaye”

Lament of a girl on her departure from father's home to husband's residence.

In pure grief, it compares with Bahadur Shah Zafar's poems on his helplessness or Amir Khusro's poem on Nizamuddin Awliya's death. Joosh Malihabadi has composed a “Shahr Aashoob”, which is by nature Marsiyah of the great Owadh empire:

“Yaad Tu Hugee Wuh Matia Burj Ki Bhi Dast'an?”

*Ab Bhi Jis Ki Khak Say Uthta Hay Rah Rah Kar Dhuw'an
Tumnay Qaisar Bagh Ku Dekha Tu Huga Barh'a?
Aaj Bhi Aati Hay Jis Say Hai Akhtar Ki Sad'a"*

*Perhaps you remember the glories of Matia Burj?
Even today the fog of burning fire rises.
I am sure you have visited the magnificent Qaisar Baagh.
It still echoes with the voice of Ah! Akhtar!*

3. The focal point of rational renaissance:

Lucknow became the focal point of a cultural renaissance with the shifting of capital from Faizabad to Lucknow in 1776. Under the royal patronage, Gazals, Qawalies and Sher-o-Shairi reached their zenith. As a centre of Muslim Tradition, Lucknow witnessed the formation of Lucknow school of poetry under renowned poets like Anis, Dabir, Imam Buksh Nasikh, Mirza Mohammad Raza Khan Burq, Atish, Mirza, Shauq, Asar, Josh and others. Apart from Gazals, another form of long narrative poem for which Lucknow is famous is Masnavi. Marsiyah writing in Urdu also reached a new height through three forms - Marsiyah, Salaam and Nuha. Urdu language attained perfection in Lucknow and slowly Lucknow emerged as a cradle of unforgettable Gazals, Masnavi and Marsiyah. Moreover, Lucknow is also called the "City of Ad'ab". In fact, it is here that one can experience the sweetness of the language in its true sense of expression. Youngsters always paid respect to their elders by performing Taslim seven times. Various cultural ingredients have contributed to the richness of this unique city. Amir Menai was convinced that he wouldn't find a wonder like Lucknow even in paradise, and expressed as follows:

*"Kahan Hungi Amir Easi Aday'in Hoor'o Ghulman May;
Raheyga Khuld May Bhi Y'ad Ham Ku Lucknow Barsoon"*

*Surely, one will not find the elegance of Lucknow among Hoories and handsome boys;
I will remember Lucknow even in the Jannah*

4. Unique Costume:

The Nawabs of Owadh were great patrons of fine arts and famous for their flair of detailing on their outfits. Chikankari is a unique and well known craft involving delicate and artistic hand embroidery. Delicate designs created originally on pristine white fine mulls and muslin, Noorjehan gifted this art to India. It had its finest flowering in the 17th and 18th centuries under the Nawabs of Owadh. There is a popular legend that a courtesan in the Nawab of Owadh's Harem was a master of this art. He was so impressed by the work of his beloved that under her supervision he established a training workshop where this art of embroidery would be developed further. Chikankari thus received great impetus during the Nawabi period. The source of most design motifs in Chikankari is Mughal. These motifs can also be seen in the ornamentation of Mughal buildings like the Taj Mahal and the monuments of Fatehpur Sikri.

Besides Chikan work the Zardozi and Kamdani works of Lucknow are also appreciated far and wide. These hand embroidery works with gold and silver threads are done on

Angarkha, Dupattas, Lehengas, Cholis, Dupalli Topi, shoes etc. Lucknow is in fact among the few cities that duly understands the grace of the 'Dupatta' or the covering cloth. Angarkha was commonly used by the nobles of Lucknow until 1920s, when it was replaced by English dress code by force.

A poet cherished the glory of Lucknow as follows:

*“Lug Mushtaq Thay, Did’ar Kay Diwanay Thay;
Haft Iqleem May, Is Shahar Kay Afsanay Thay”*

People were keen and anxious to see the glory of Lucknow;

Wonders of this city were under discussion amongst the citizens of the global village.

5. Masters of Arts and Crafts:

From time immemorial Lucknow is known for its gems, jewelry and enameling work. Exquisite silverwares like Pandaan, Atardaan, Qidaah – (silver cup of drinking), tea set, dinner sets with pattern of hunting scenes and roses are very popular. The Bidri and Zarbuland silver works of Lucknow find expression on excellent pieces of jewel boxes, trays, bowls etc. Life-like ivory and bone carvings from Lucknow with motifs of flowers, leaves, creepers, trees, birds and animals are widely appreciated. The master craftsmen create intricate items like Khanjar, knives, lamp shades and small toys. In fact the ivory works from this city continue to find a place at museums and private collection of admirers. Fine pottery from Lucknow is yet another work of art that has captured the imagination of the viewers.

Besides these well known craft works, Gota weaving, dyeing, silver-warq making, wood works and Tazia making were specialties of the Lucknawi tradition. Beautiful Tazias and Zari, prepared with gold and silver papers are made by master craftsmen to mark the solemn occasion of Muharrum.

6. House of Attar :

Attar or ittar (eastern fragrance) which was introduced in India by the Muslims reached a new height in Lucknow. Lucknow can be counted as one of the few cities in the North India where the love of exotic fragrances and the art of Attar making reached exalted heights. The credit for popularizing the perfumery in Lucknow goes to the Nawabs of Owadh, particularly to Nawab Wajid Ali Shah. Like his predecessor, Nawab Nasiruddin Haidar, he built fountains of Attar around his bedrooms which were continuously running, spreading fragrance in the atmosphere. Fragrance has always been an important part of the cultural life of Owadh. In the days of the Nawabs, perfumes were used not only for wearing, but also added to the food to give it more fragrance and taste. It was created from various aromatic herbs, spices, Sandal oil, Musk, abstract of flowers, and leaves. The Motia Attar of Junpur, Rose Attar of Ghazipur, Khus Attar of Musapur and Oud-Agar Attar of Asam are always available in Attar shops at Lucknow. Apart from Attar, Lucknowi Paan-Zarda and Khamira are hot favorites which admirers exchange as gifts. Even today in Lucknow, it is not rare to find in a typical Muslim wedding the breathtaking fragrance of Attar.

7. Lucknowi Gilori:

In Lucknow, Paan is known as Gilori. The Paan was the first thing served to a guest at the time of his arrival and at his departure. This custom, recorded by Ibn Batutah - the famous historian of the medieval era - still remains popular. Paan is a leaf which grows in hot and humid climate but under the shade so that sunlight does not burn it. Generally Paan is used with catechu (Kattha) and quick lime which brings red colour to the mouth. Beetle nuts and other items like clove, cardamom, and peppermint are added for special taste and aroma. Some of the Lucknowi ingredients of Paan are as follows: Gulqand, Kharik, Munaqqa, Grated Coconut, Cashew Chutni, Pistachio Chutni, Cherry, Special Salli Supari, Rose powder, Cardamom Water, Badam Chutney. Offering someone Gilori, for instance, is a sign of respect. Shahjehan, the architect of the Taj Mahal, once offered poisoned Paan to an unwanted suitor of his daughter. The young man, not wanting to offend Shahjehan, accepted the Paan, and died quickly thereafter. It was Queen Noorjehan - the mother of Shahjehan - who popularized the chewing of Paan as a royal tradition in India. Queen Noorjehan discovered that Paan made her lips red which is why it was also used as a beauty supplement

8. Recreation and Chowk of Lucknow:

Although Kite making was popular throughout India, this activity attained perfection in Lucknow. Under Nawabi patronage, this form of art flourished in Lucknow and kites of different types, shapes and sizes were developed. Birds fight and Parrot flying kept the elites busy throughout the year. Expert servants were appointed to train and look after the parrots and pigeons. Their sports were not only for joy but a sense of pride. The art of training pigeons was perfected by the nobility of Lucknow. The pigeon flying event is yet another exciting game that is eagerly awaited. The other prestigious sport of the Nawabs was hunting; it was a pleasing hobby which was adopted by each and every monarch.

No account of Lucknowi culture is complete without the mention of the famous 'Chowk' of Lucknow. The term 'Chowk' has become synonymous with Lucknow. 'Chowk' has played a vital role in the development of the Lucknowi culture. It was the pivotal point around which the traders, engravers, painters, artisans, weavers, singers flourished and grew.

9. Courtesans of Lucknow and Urdu:

The uniqueness of Lakhnawi Tehzeeb can also be noticed when original natives of Lucknow city tend to converse amongst others which is considered to be a delicate language all over the world. The city of graces uses exalted form of addresses such as "Huzoor", "Janaab", "Hazrat" and "Shukriyah" in Lucknow. While speaking, people generally use "Ji" (for "Haan" or yes) as a mark of respect, particularly when someone elderly calls a younger person, he replies "Ji Janaab". This is a city that still speaks the language of "Aap-Janaab" and the dictum of "Pehlay Aap" is still a part of everyday life for a true Lucknowi. Youngsters still pay "Tasleem" and "Adaab" thrice to elders – these Lucknowi manners have their own charm. Also, a Lakhnawi will prefer to use the "Hum"

over “Mai” (both words mean I or me) anytime. These peculiarities of Lucknow can be easily observed even when they go out of the city and get instantly identified by the way of their usual Lukhnawi dialect. Even the kids are groomed in accordance with the customs and traditions of the city where they greet elders with proper salutations such as “Namaste”, “Salaam”, “Dhanyaw’ad” and “Shukriya” instead of “Thanks”. “Hamara Lucknow” is the popular phrase used by the native of Lucknow, thanks to the cultural heritage, unique lifestyle and old world charm that the city still has in store. There is a sense of brotherhood and the famous “Ganga-Jamuni” tradition is still prevalent in Lucknow where Hindus and Muslims live together in harmony. This cultural uniqueness of the city has actually blended the customs of the two communities that have been coexisting peacefully for centuries. Nazakat, Tehzeeb and Tameez occupy a distinct place in the hearts of die-hard Lucknowites and they are likely to be hurt even with the slightest hint of rude language or behavior. “Hamari Shaan May Ghustakhi” phrase still holds relevance in the life of a true Lakhnawi. The people of Lucknow actually take pride while addressing the other as “Aap” instead of “Tum”, which is used extensively elsewhere in India. “Tum” word is regarded very demeaning in Lucknow and people get offended if someone refers to them as “Tum”. It is akin to using abusive language.

In Lucknow, association with the courtesans started with the reign of Shuja ud Daulah (1753-74). It became fashionable for the noblemen to associate with courtesan, either for pleasure or for social distinction. An educated man like Hakim Mahdi, who later became Vazir of Owadh, owed his initial success to a courtesan named Piyaro, who advanced her own money to enable him to make an offering to the Nawab Sultan on his first appointment as Governor of a Province of Owadh. This situation went so far that it is said that until a person had association with courtesans he was not a polished man. Credit of the beauty of Urdu language goes to Lucknow and the Nawabs. Under their patronage, Urdu flourished and became a sweet language. Courtesans in Lucknow were recognized as entertainers as well as preservers of high culture of the royal court. Courtesans held respect within the Nawabi court despite their providing private services to specific patrons; this is why they were not entirely considered part of the Ashr’af (the Muslim respectable gentry). With the decline of the Mughal Empire in Delhi, the power of Nawabs of Owadh increased. Many courtesans as well as poets who belonged to noble families of Delhi and the surrounding areas moved to Lucknow.

The close association of the court, the courtesans, and Urdu can not be denied. The impact of courtesans on Lucknow's poetry can be judged from the fact that under their influence, the poets of Lucknow gave a new direction to the Ghazal. They chose a female 'sweet-heart' in place of the hitherto universally popular male or at best without gender, as the object of their love. Their expressions amply prove that their sweet-heart is usually an accomplished courtesan. This it-self was a landmark in Urdu poetry in as much as it imparted genuineness and sincerity to the expression of Urdu poets who, for the first time, presented a clear and distinct concept and picture of 'women', the desired women, in Urdu poetry, which was an accomplished courtesan.

As the courtesan was the center of their thoughts, they freely gave expression to their ideas and feelings on different parts of the body of their sweet-heart which was unheard earlier. That is why in the Urdu Ghazal, Masnavi, and Wasokht of those days, we come across allusions to the act of sex itself. True, some of the verses written in those days can be considered even vulgar but let us not forget that they represented the general state of morals of that era. These women also formed the central theme of a peculiar type of poetry called Rekhti in which the male poet used feminine language and liked to give expression to their suppressed thoughts.

A scholar of Lucknow, Mohammad Baqir Shams, has disclosed in "Lucknow Ki Tehzib" as follows:

"Maulvi Shibli Nomani, Niyaz Fatehpuri and other literates were the regular audience of the Kutha of Chaudra'in, the famous courtesan. When Maharaja Patyala visited Lucknow, a Mehfil of Ghazal was arranged in his honour. Mushtari, the famous courtesan was invited to entertain. She held command over extempore poetry composition. Members of royal retinue requested her to read something in praise of the Maharaja. She followed the instruction with perfection. The Maharaja was very much impressed upon witnessing her ability and command over the language. She was invited again in a gathering of monarchs when she was pregnant. Another outsider poet was also there; he sensed her physical condition and spontaneously recited a verse loudly mocking her which is as follows:

*"Hamal Nu Maheney Ka Hay Mushtari Ku;
Kuee Dam Mey Baccha Huwa Jata Hay"*

Mushtri is heavily pregnant;

At any moment she may deliver a child.

Mushtari did not lose her temper and spontaneously responded in the same Qafiyah as follows:

*"Khushi Aap Ku Is Qadar Kiyu Na Hu;
Kay Hamsheer Zada Huwa Chahata Hay"*

Why should not you be happy?

As son of your sister is expected!

The legendary biography of Umrao Jaan Ada - the famous courtesan and poetess of the last phase of the Nawabi era - has provided a glance on Lucknow's distinct cultural heritage, viz; Nifasat and Tahzib (etiquette). Her beauty, style, sensibility and her affairs continue to inspire writers, poets and film-makers. According to all historical accounts, Nawabs and noblemen used to send their children to Kothas to learn noble and regal etiquette, cultured manners, and the art of literary appreciation from courtesans - many of whom were poetesses in their own right. They themselves mastered the art of music and were regarded as women of virtue. They were not "Queens of the Baz'ar" and never exposed their bodies in public. Nawabs and notables usually established relation with them through the institution of "Mutah", which is legal according to the Imamiyyah. It was a common tradition in those days that in marriage, along with dowry, monarchs also gifted maids. Often these maids held much influential position due to their wit and

glamour. The poet, Mirza Ali Baig Nazneen, however, warns of this practice through the following couplet:

“Aesi Jawan Lunddi Aey Nazneen Na Lu Tum;

Lay Jaeyga Tumhara Shuhar Isay Ura Kar”

Don't accept a young courtesan in dowry;

Your husband will not spare her

After the fall of Lucknow, which was famous for its one hundred thousand new inventions saw the darkest painful phase. The cruel East India Company snatched the power from the Nawab by their wicked tricks and the Nawab who didn't want to shed the blood of the people surrendered. The English writers and their touts' writers defame the Nawabs and its culture and coined several fabricated stories. Those vultures of literature have focused their energy to present Lucknow as a hub of courtesan due to sectarian hatred only, as the Nawabs were Shias. The cruel British Empire wanted to eliminate the beautiful memories of generousities and intellectual patronage of the Nawabs from the minds so they propagated against them on a large scale. This hatred established to such extent that every time someone heard Lucknow, people smiled and recalled the Tawaifs, only. The British had deliberately muddied the truth about Kothas of Tawaif in order to degrade Nawabi culture, and to down the prestige of Owadh. In a campaign waged against Nawabi development and charities, the British Empire confiscated large properties and prime real estate donated to various public welfare institutions by the Nawabs.

Abdul Halim Sharar has mentioned in “Lucknow: The Last Phase of an oriental Culture” as follows:

A person's manner of speech is the first sign of his good breeding and manners, and every developed civilisation all over the world improves and reforms its language. The people of Lucknow have developed a very polished and refined language. The masses and uneducated people speak better Urdu than many poets and men of letters of other cities of India, and they show great delicacy and discretion in their choice of words. A courtesan expressed her menses disorder to a Hakim as follows:

“Is Mahenay Meri Nam'az Qaza Nahi Huee”

I did not miss Salaat this month

Poet Taslim praised the command of Urdu language of the people of Lucknow as follows:

“Yeh Latafat Hu Zabane Ghair Ku Kiyunkar Naseeb;

Rashke Mawje Aabe Kausar Hay Zabane Lucknow”

Such delicacy of conversation cannot be found by outsiders (of Lucknow);

Language of Lucknow is so pious that even the spring of Kaws'ar would be proud of it.

A Lucknowi Aalim visited Karbala, Iraq and stayed there for long, neglecting the responsibilities of his family. After some time one of his friends intended to travel to Karbala, and asked the family of his friend if they wished to send something to the said Aalim. The elder brother of the above Aalim asked his sister in law (the wife of the self-exiled Aalim) to write a letter to her husband and ask him to come back. She was shy by

nature, so she requested him to write himself. The brother in law proposed this famous verse of the Manqabat, which is as follows:

“Ya Mujhey Karbala Bula Bheju;

Ya Meray Dard Ki Dawa Bheju”

Either call me to Karbala;

Or arrange medicine to remove my pain

Mir Anis visited Hyderabad Dakkan to attend a Majlis where he recited a Marsiyah. Contrary to the tradition of Lucknow, nobody in the audience passed any appreciative remarks on any of his stanza. As was the tradition of Lucknow, that when a student recites his verses and if he commits a mistake, seniors correct him, whereas when the seniors recited their verses, the audience whole heartedly acknowledged it with salutation and appreciative remarks. Mir was used to such atmosphere; hence, when he found the audience unresponsive, he read several stanzas with patience and afterwards put the paper a side and chanted spontaneously:

“Haey Lucknow! Tujhay Kahan Say Laoon”.

(Ah! Lucknow! Where should I find your resemblance?)

10. Cuisines of Owadh:

Discussion on Lucknow will be incomplete without its delicious and mouth watering Nawabi cuisines. The best thing about the Owadh culture was their way of preparing food. The dinner of the Nawabs usually comprised of 25 to 30 dishes. On special occasions, however, hundreds of dishes were prepared. The Nawabs loved to experiment with their food. Major credit goes to Nawab Wajid Ali Shah for enriching much of Lucknow's cultural potential. An unusual man whose preference for the finer things in life was matched by his equal interest in state affairs, this poet-King composed verses that inspire singers to this day. The Nawab's interests in the arts was shared by his people who freely indulged their refined and artistic inclinations by playing chess, visiting the theatre and gorging on fine cuisine.

Chronicles list about 37 types of breads, 47 types of Pulao, 35 types of Zarda, 5 types of meat curry and 37 types of Halwa cooked in those days. Ever the truant, once Wajid Ali Shah tricked Prince Asman Qadar of Delhi by serving a mutton curry which looked like marmalade. Asman Qadar then reversed the trick and served a lot of dishes made of sugar but which looked otherwise. Cooking competitions were common between the Nawabs and they hire services of one of the best chefs and entertained him generously.

In the 1780s, the kingdom of Owadh was struck by famine. Nawab Asifuddaulah began building the Bara Imambargha in his capital Lucknow, to provide employment to the people. Feeding hundreds of workers was an enormous task, so the cooks used an ingenious traditional way to prepare the food. Rice, meat, vegetables and spices were put in huge vessels, the top sealed and the dish allowed boiling in the slow heat of Bukhari ovens. As the Handis were being opened, the Nawab, who happened to pass by, decided to taste the food.

Delighted by the subtle flavour and delicate taste, he introduced it into the royal kitchens, where refined by chefs, the unique Lucknow style of Dum Pukht cuisine was born. Every great cuisine style of India carries its legends but the story of Dum Pukht is unique; vegetarian food like Dum Pukht, Dum Aloo or the non-vegetarian items like Dum Mutton and Dum Murg, Murg Mussalam, tall-e-Shabnam, Murg Joshina are variety of Lucknow alone. The Dum' style of cooking or the art of cooking over slow fire originated here.

If Dum Pukht cuisine is the ultimate specialist experience, Nihari and Naan - a mutton dish served for breakfast - is the only thing that can complete a holiday to the land of Mughals. The Bawarchies (cooks) of Owadh specialized in the preparation of dishes like Kawab (the Lucknowi pronunciation for Kabab). Lucknow has earned such a reputation for Kawabs that it is often called the City of Kawabs. Among the 30 Kawabs are 20 non-veg while the rest veg. A few varieties of Kawabs include Shami Kawab, Kakori Kawab, Galawat Kawab, Pathar Ke Kawab, Nargasi Kawab, Seekh Kawab. Qurma, Kulchas, Rumali Ruties, Parathas and types of Biryani, including Dum Biryani, Noor Pulav or Mori Pulav are some of the other specialties. Taste of each dish was different, as per Arabi phrase:

"Kullu Jadidin Lazizun".

Every new item is delicious

11. Contribution in the socio cultural activities:

Whether it is Rumi Darwaza or Bara Imambara, Chota Imambara, Havelis or Kothis, all are evidence of the glorious past. To preserve the residents of Nawabs, Havilies like Dilkusha, Bibipur and others today are being used as luxurious hotels where visitors can enjoy the Nawabi atmosphere. Lucknow's medieval history begins with its elevation to the capital city under the Nawabs of Owadh. The architectural contributions of the Owadh Nawabs include numerous Masajid and places; many paintings of these are now maintained at different museums and private art galleries, with the Bara Imambargah, Chotha Imambargah, and the Roomi Darwaza being notable examples of the glorious buildings of the past. During the era of Asif al Dawlah, resplendent buildings were constructed. The roof of the Imambargah of Asif al Dawlah is one of the wonders of world. He also built 400 gardens influenced by the Iranian tradition.

12. Evening of the Lucknowi culture:

The 'Golden city of the East', Lucknow represents a culture that combines emotional warmth, a high degree of grace, courtesy and a love for gracious living. There still remain people who possess these beautiful qualities. This cultural richness, famous as 'Lucknowi Tehzib', has blended the cultures of two communities living side by side for centuries, sharing similar interests, speaking a common language - Urdu. Like the fall of other civilizations, Lucknow also suffered greatly after the English invasion. Brutal conquerors destroyed every sign of the cultural heritage, and the generous became beggars.

Historical accounts provide us the reasons behind financial destruction of Lucknowi Tehzib. The extravagant lifestyle of the Nawabs became a burden for them at a time when their properties and incomes were declining. Friends and foes, both have admitted, that class discrimination and the power of the courtesans lead this civilization towards its fall. The following Farsi phrase was common in Lucknow, which pointed out the reason of economical disaster:

*“Chaar Chez Ast Bar Raisan Farz;
Gurguri, Palki, Patarya, Qarz”*

Four things are considered compulsory for the elites;
Huqqah, Palki, extra marital relations and loan.

Several famous Hindi movies used Lucknow as their backdrop such as "Junoon", "Shatranj Key Khilari" and many more. You can discover and rediscover Lucknow everyday. The following lines can not present even an iota of Lucknow, infact volumes are required to cover its golden heritage and civilization. No one has known Lucknow to the full, and never will. That is why the following phrase was coined:

*“Jisay Aap Kehtay Hayn Lucknow;
Usay Hum Kehtay Hayn Dusra Jahan”.*

The place that you call Lucknow;
We call it the other world.

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