

MULCHOWK, SUNDARI CHOWK & THE ARCHITECTURE GALLERIES

PATAN DARBAR, NEPAL



MULCHOWK COURTYARD



GOLDEN DOORWAY



SUNDARI CHOWK COURTYARD  
TUSHAHITI STEP-WELL



BHANDARKHAL TANK



ARCHITECTURE GALLERIES

MULCHOWK

Originally established by Srinivasa Malla in 1666 and later renovated in the 1730s and 1850s, Mulchowk ("main courtyard") is the heart of Patan Darbar and the hub of its ritual activities. This magnificent quadrangle with its large open courtyard is almost twice as large as the adjacent Sundari Chowk and slightly larger than the Mulchowks of Kathmandu and Bhaktapur. The courtyard features historic tile paving from the 17th century. The main entrance, commissioned in the 1850s, exhibits a much larger scale and proportions remarkably integrated into the older Malla-period façade. After years of deterioration the courtyard underwent a thorough restoration in 2011.

YANTAJU SHRINE

The goddess known as Yantamode and later Yantaju was an *istadevata* (personal deity) to the Malla kings during their reign, presiding for five centuries over their affairs. King Srinivasa Malla commissioned this gilt copper repoussé shrine to Yantaju in the center of Mulchowk, a companion to the nearby Taleju shrines.

GOLDEN DOORWAY

The Golden Doorway marking the entry to the Taleju shrine inside Mulchowk is a fine example of the metallurgical arts of Patan. The ensemble consists of three gilt copper repoussé components: a door, an ornate *torana* (tympanum), and two life-size sculptures of Ganga and Yamuna, deifications of the two most sacred rivers of Hinduism.

ARCHITECTURE GALLERIES

The interior of the first floor of Mulchowk houses Architecture Galleries, an ongoing extension of the Patan Museum. Historical windows, columns, struts, tympana, and other artefacts are displayed in a typological order, accompanied by drawings and written commentary. Once completed, the galleries will include a media room and additional exhibitions in the north wing of Mulchowk and the east wing of Sundari Chowk showcasing architectural drawings and facsimiles of historic paintings.

The Vidyapith (Sanskrit: "learning room"), an esoteric shrine dating to the 17th-century and a rare example of Malla-period interior architecture, can be accessed through the galleries on the first floor of Mulchowk.

SUNDARI CHOWK

This exceptional three-storeyed courtyard marks the southern edge of the Darbar at the main crossroads of Patan. Originally constructed as a two-storeyed courtyard building in 1628, Sundari Chowk has since undergone a series of interventions, retaining stylistic features from various time periods. In the 1730s, the building received an additional floor, distinctive triple-bayed windows, and a screened gallery overlooking the courtyard. The eastern façade, reconstructed after the east wing collapsed in 1934, contrasts starkly with the rest of the building for its lack of ornament and use of ordinary brick.

TUSHAHITI STEP-WELL

The oval-shaped, slightly cusped Tusha Hiti step-well was commissioned in 1647 by King Siddhinarasimha Malla, probably to perform ritual ablutions. The fountain is furnished with a gilt bronze spout supporting an image of Laksmi-Narayan on Garuda. Its retaining walls are divided into registers of niches, each of which is fitted with a tantric divinity carved in stone or gilt metal. A miniature stone replica of the Krishna Mandir sits on its main axis, and a protective serpent encircles the brink.

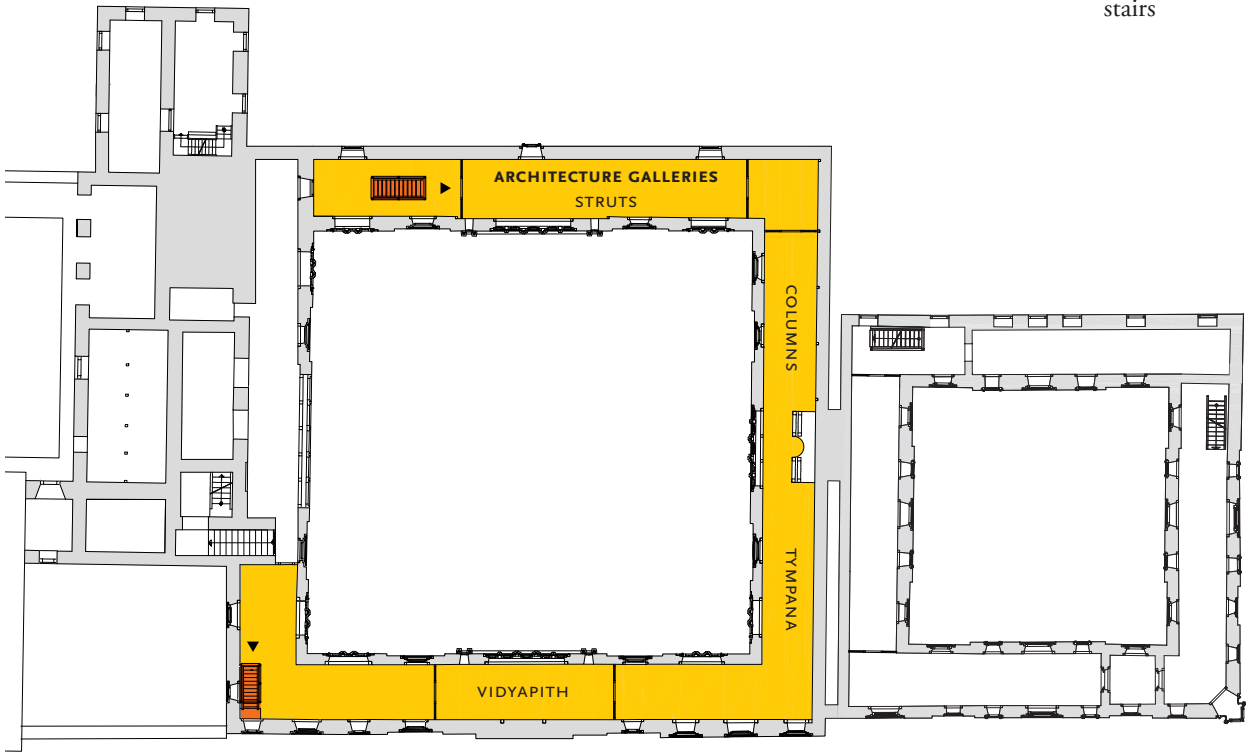
BHANDARKHAL TANK

The focal element of the garden behind the palace, the Bhandarkhal water tank was built in 1647 as the main water storage facility for the Darbar. The architecture of the tank incorporates a meditation pavilion, a stepped terrace, two stone lions, a carved stone spout, and relief carvings dating to the 17th century. The tank is connected to Patan's historic water infrastructure, channeling groundwater from nearby sources through terracotta channels. The tank had dried up and was in ruins until extensive restoration in 2012.

FIRST FLOOR

galleries

stairs



GROUND FLOOR

