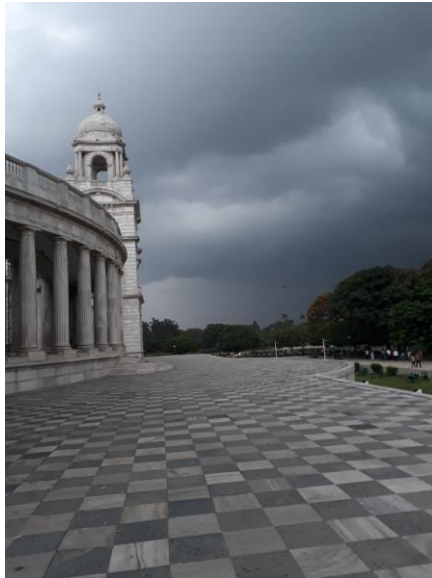


VICTORIA MEMORIAL HALL

**The Iconic Structure of Calcutta & the British
Colonial Legacy**



A Free e-Guide Book
By
Sohail ANWAR

The FORGOTTEN TAPES

|Museum Tours| Sale of Museum Publications|

Victoria Memorial Hall, Kolkata

This is a free Guide eBook introducing the Victoria Memorial Hall and its Museum to the readers and visitors. It is available in both eBook and PDF formats. This booklet is meant for light reading. It has information on the history, construction and the architectural design of the Victoria Memorial Hall. It also has glimpses from the galleries and details about some artefacts present in the Museum.

It is published and distributed free by ‘**The Forgotten Tapes**’, an organization that works to bring Museums to everyone, by conducting workshops and museum tours of many iconic museums in India, including the Victoria Memorial Hall. It also publishes a number of Museum related books and also sells replicas of Museum artefacts and copy paintings

The main book of the same title is available on KINDLE as eBook and on Amazon and other retail outlets as Paperback. It is also available in e-book format for free reading on Kindle.

Copyright ©2021 Forgotten Tapes

First Impression: August 2021

Price: Free

Published by Forgotten Tapes

Sold by: The Forgotten Tapes Store, B7-406, Larica Township,
Kolkata 700124

Email: forgottentapes1@gmail.com

The Victoria Memorial Hall is an iconic structure in Kolkata, and any visit to the city is incomplete without a visit to the Victoria Memorial Hall. It is the most glaring and lasting example of the British legacy in the Indian subcontinent.



It stands at the heart of the city's green space, a massive and imposing white marble memorial to the first Queen Empress of British India who ruled the country from 1858 till her death in 1901.

Her love for Indians and her fondness for India alone justify the presence of this colonial heritage in the most populous metropolitan city of India, Kolkata.

Queen Victoria never visited India, but she was so fond of Hindoostan and Hindoostanis, that she insisted to have Indian servants and also learnt Hindusthani from her Indian Munshi (personal servant and tutor) Abdul in the last leg of her long rule. Abdul introduced her to the Indian way of sitting, and eating. He taught her Hindi, Urdu and Persian.



So when this beloved Queen died in 1901 (the longest serving Monarch in history at that time) Lord Curzon the then Viceroy of India proposed building of a memorial to her here in Calcutta, the capital of British India.

Soon there was much enthusiasm towards this project of building memorial for the Queen and a large amount of money was collected as donation for the memorial liberally donated by the Indian Princes, Zamindars and even common people.



On 4th January 1906 Queen's grandson and then the Prince of Wales George (who became King George V later on) came over to Calcutta from England to lay the foundation stone of the memorial.

The construction work however, did not start immediately as Calcutta in particular and Bengal in general was witnessing fierce agitation due to the Partition of Bengal, an unfortunate decision taken by

Lord Curzon to quell the freedom struggle, which later on had to be nullified in 1910, leading to the shifting of the capital of the British India from Calcutta to Delhi.

At last in 1910 (10th March) the construction work was handed over to the famous British construction company based in Calcutta, Martin & Co., and the work finally did start formally. It took 15 years to complete the structure at an approx cost of one crore five lakh Indian rupees.

Edward, the Prince of Wales and later on King Edward VIII opened this monument on 28 December 1921, as a public museum celebrating the Queen and the grandeur of the British rule in India.



The Victoria Memorial Hall, as it is called, overlooks the Calcutta maidan, and is probably the only British Memorial in the Indian subcontinent which is so revered and popular. It is an institution of national importance and is under the administrative control of the Govt. of India under the Ministry of Culture. The management is however, an autonomous body run by a Trust Board with the Governor of West Bengal as Trustee Chairman.



The memorial is built of white marbles brought from Makrana, Rajasthan, which supplied marbles for Taj

Mahal too. In fact, we see a resemblance to the Taj Mahal in its architectural design. The chief architect of this memorial was William Emerson.

The total area of the structure is 56 acres and it has 4 water bodies and a vast well maintained garden all around the memorial. The place where Victoria Memorial stands today, stood the Central Prison of British India which was relocated to Alipore to make way for the memorial.



The main building bears the characteristics of the Italian Renaissance Period architecture, more precisely the

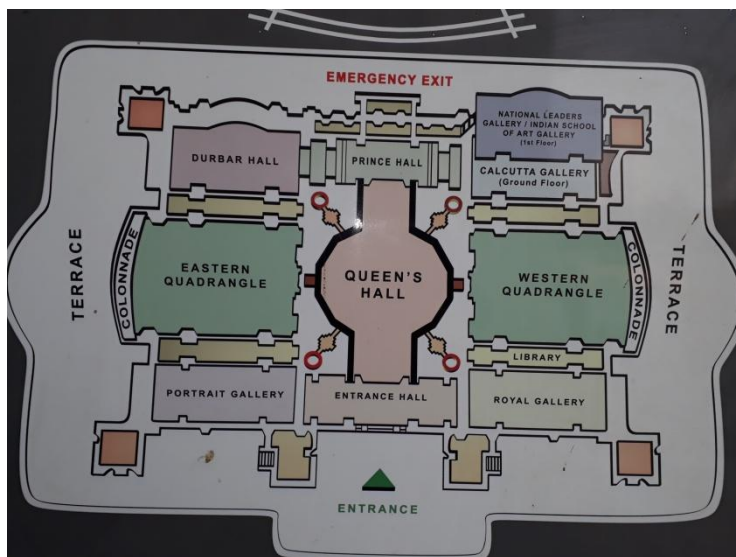
Indo-Sarcenic Revivalist style and is occidental in design. The main dome has a wind vane, 16 feet in height and 3 tonnes in weight in the shape of a bronze angel, called Angel of Freedom.

The memorial stands at the south end of the Maidan at the head of the Cathedral Road. The road around it is called Queen's Way.

The architectural style of the Victoria Memorial Hall is shaped externally in the form of letter 'H', the two ends being joined by curved colonnades called Eastern and Western Quadrangles. The curved colonnades have two rows, each having twelve columns of Tuscan order.

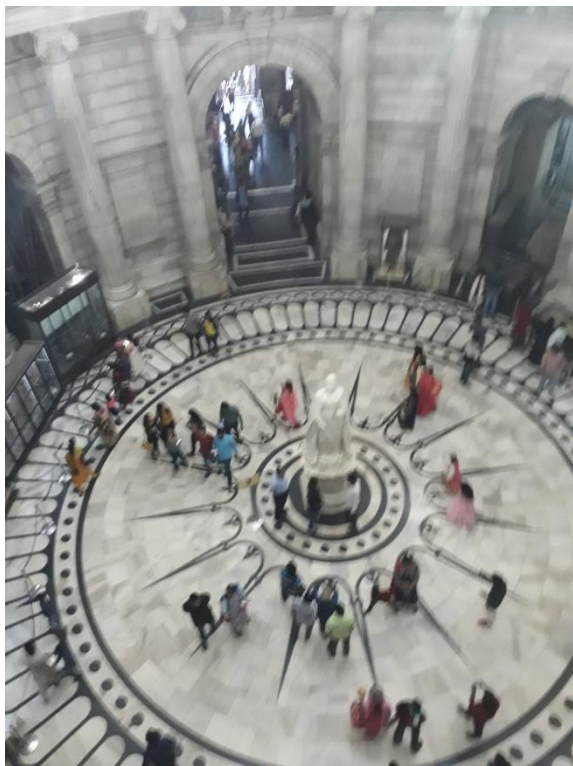


It accommodates a historical and an art museum consisting of more than 28000 artefacts including arms and ammunitions, oil painting, books, manuscripts, coins, letters and communications of Viceroy and Governor Generals besides some of the personal belongings of Queen Victoria, like her piano, her desk and clothes etc., relating mainly to the East India Company and early British Period of the Indian history, arranged in 14 functioning galleries.



The layout of the museum galleries is as follows – the north Entrance Hall flanked by Royal Gallery and Portrait Gallery at two ends, followed by the main hall under the central dome called Queen’s Hall. The Queen’s Hall has two doors opening to the two

quadrangles, eastern and western. At the south end of the central hall is the Prince Gallery again flanked by the Durbar Hall and the Calcutta Gallery on the two sides. The Prince Hall leads to the exit in the south.



There are galleries on the first floor also, accessed by stairs either from the Queen's Hall or from the right side stairs at the south exit. The first floor houses the Biplobi Bharat Galleries, the galleries about the revolutionary Indians.

Artefacts in the Museum

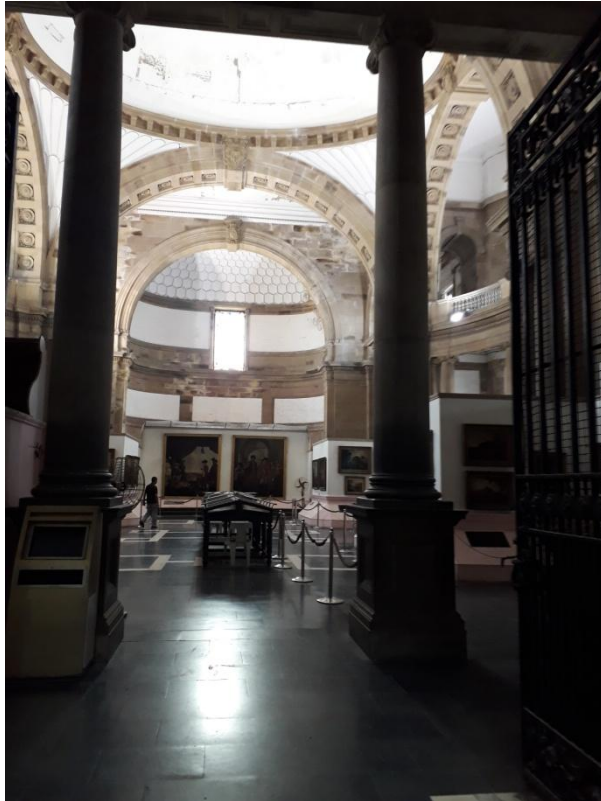
A detailed account of many important artefacts and the underlying stories behind them are present in the main book of the same title, available on KINDLE as eBook and also in paperbacks.

Link to download: Please write to us to enable us to send you the link to buy – forgottentapes1@gmail.com or send WhatsApp message to 9147009473



The Central Dome from inside – 184 feet high

Some of the Important Artefacts:



- The French Cannons used by Siraj ud Daula's army at the Battle of Plassey in 1757

- The Stone Throne called the Musnad, where after the win in the Battle of Plassey, Clive was made to sit by Mir Jaffar, the new Nawab.
- Enfield Rifle, from the series of the ones introduced by the East India Company to its Sepoy, that led to the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857
- The Queen's Proclamation of 1858, read at Allahabad Durbar
- The Queen's Proclamation of 1876, read at the Delhi Durbar, attended by her son and Prince of Wales Edward VII
- Queen's Piano
- Model of pre-steam engine ship used by East India Company merchants to come to India
- The Foot Zenith – the Land Surveyor machine used by Lord Everest, also used to survey Himalayas and central India plateaus
- The second largest oil painting in the world on a single canvas – artist Vasilli Verestchagin. The painting captures the State visit of Prince of Wales later King Edward VII to Jaipur along with the Maharaja of Jaipur. The occasion was the inauguration of Queen Victoria as Queen Empress of British India and the Durbar at Delhi
- Oil Paintings by Daniels – William and Thomas Daniels, Johann Zoffany, Charles D'Oyly and Simpson, capturing early 18th century India

- Statues of King George V and his wife Queen Mary, Lord Dalhousie, Lord Wellesley, Lord Hastings and Clive inside the memorial
- Old maps of the city, census papers, old photos of Calcutta city by Bourne & Shepherd
- A live-size model of city life – Chitpore Road in Calcutta during the early 19th century (now closed to public)
- A detailed history of Calcutta from 1680, the time when Job Charnock got possession of three villages, Sutanuti, Kalikata and Gobindopur from the landlord Subarna Roychoudhury of Barisha till the city ceased to be the capital of British India in 1910.
- Photos from the scene of construction of the Victoria Memorial Hall
- 125 items of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose – Fountain Pen, Civil Service Documents, Resignation letter, Cap, Currency notes of AARZI HUKUMAT AZAD HIND, INA uniforms, INA documents, Swords, etc.
- Documents and newspaper cuttings telling the stories of the revolutionary Indians whose underground activities hasten the retreat of the British occupation from India – Alipore Bomb case papers, Newspaper advertisement regarding Prize of Rs.5000 for information on Khudiram, Note book of Sachindra Nath Sanyal, Mouser

Rifle and Rodda Arms Case papers, Bikaji Cama's Akhand Bharat Flag (undivided India), etc.

The details and the images of the abovementioned artefacts are available in the main book available on KINDLE. Please write to us to enable us to send you the link to buy.

Write to us – forgottentapes1@gmail.com or WhatsApp message 9147009473



Model of the Victoria Memorial Hall

The Museum is opened from Tuesday to Sunday, 10.00 am to 6.00 pm for the public. Ticket is Rs.30/- per person, Rs.100/- per person from SAARC countries and Rs.500/- per person from other countries.

Images from the gallery



Queen's Piano in the Royal Gallery



Queen's Proclamation in the Central Hall



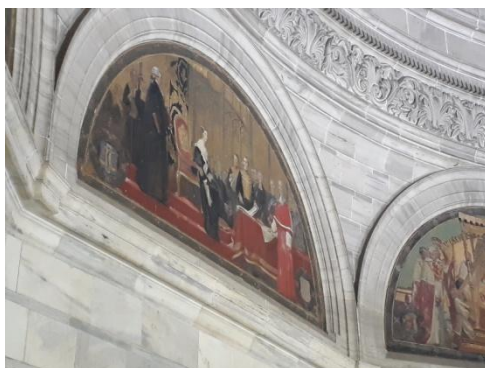
Model of the Pre Steam Engine Merchant Ship



French Cannon used in the Battle of Plassey in 1757



Oil Painting showing Colonial Calcutta



Frank Salisbury's Oil Painting showing Queen's Life events



Map of Old Colonial Calcutta



Entrance of Calcutta Gallery & Clive's Statue