



A slice of British life on display

'The British left-behind show' inaugurated

Staff Reporter

CHENNAI: "I have travelled across the length and breadth of India and I have not seen one person who is a beggar, who is a thief. Such wealth I have seen in this country."

That was India according to Macaulay - in 1835 he was addressing British Parliament. He then proposed to replace India's ancient education system "for if the Indians think all that is foreign and English is good and greater, they will lose their self-respect and become a truly dominated nation."

That one more close to two centuries ago has repercussions today. The festing head that present day India shares with colonial history was the theme of an exhibition 'The British left-behind show' inaugurated by N.Ram, editor-in-chief of *The Hindu*, here on Tuesday.

"India needs to recognise the possibility of history. Without remembering the past, it is possible to understand the centrality of the British rule in the evolution of modern-day India," said M.Ram.

According to S.Muthiah,



IN DISCUSSION: P.M. Seshappa (left), president, Association of British Scholars and M.Ram, Editor-in-Chief, *The Hindu*, sharing a few thoughts about a British-era printing press at an exhibition in Chennai on Tuesday. S.Muthiah, historian (second from right) and Steve Borgia (right), CMD of INDIAN Hotels, are in the picture. PHOTO: S.GANESAN

historian, the British have left behind a legacy which inspires us. "Whether we like it or not, every institution - from the

Railways to the Army regiments - has colonial roots."

The exhibition features a collection of what the British

have left behind - furniture, personal items and their ideas.

Curiosities like a portable washbasin, a brassware ap-

plaud refrigerator and hand-operated fans, along with interesting objects such as the origin of the slang OK from

the words 'The Company's correct' or 'The creek of a Governor', Elton Yell's corrupt plunder of the Madras Presidency and the setting up of the Yale University with a part of the ill-gotten wealth are on display.

Steve Borgia, chairman and managing director of INDIAN Hotels and Inns, who is also the curator of the collection, said "Whether in India or Vancouver, these gentlemen officers were keen on preserving their identity as British subjects living abroad. Their empire was portable, and they took British with them wherever they went."

According to P.M. Seshappa, president, Association of British Scholars, the collection portrays a slice of British life in Madras, which is now Chennai.

He also said that the exhibition which is part of the 'Madras Week' celebrations should encourage the community to care more about their history.

"It is not just about historical games," he said.

The exhibition will be open till August 30 between 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. at the 18th Mile Assembly, Grande Road.

LANE | Interview

legacy of the Raj

Behind, an antique exhibition, begins on a Lalit Kala Akademi. We talk to Steve Borga, the man behind the show...

ch have helped the rest of us to be forced to...
Steve Borga, Director of...
Lalit Kala Akademi...
antique exhibition...

have items that were used by the British...
of the East India Company's and its...
Dutch way of life," he adds. Kinn's office in...
AMSTERDAM is decorated with stripes...

Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation (TTDC) and Association of...
of the Madras Week celebration is the...
of the exhibit? "Many an interesting item...
associated to a story that it carries," says...

There are many more that came to India...
from the Dutch, a tradition that would go on to...
great things - an art for the propagation of...

P We all claim to miss the good old days but do very little to keep the things that made our yesterday golden, alive. That is what I am doing now.

that were sent out on a ship to the Western...
Frontier because the British, the French...
wanted her furniture to be "strong" like that of...
the French, and so, all the antique furniture...

Centenary days of different eras...
including those with leather chairs, iron...
Mades, etc. chairs of different types, and...
many other objects that will be on display at...

of the British Raj? Behind is Lalit Kala...
Akademi, from August 25th to August 30th...



ISHA GARG

British Raj & The Madras Presidency

The British Left Behind

COLONIAL ARTEFACTS . MACHINERY . FURNITURE . PEOPLE

A MUSEUM SHOW

at Lalit Kala Academy, Chennai

25th to 30th Aug. '09
(9am - 9pm)

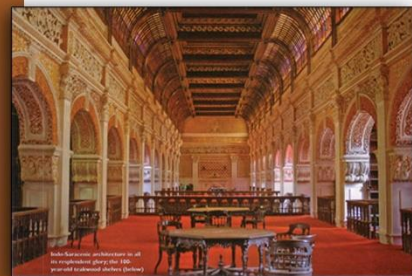
All are Welcome



The STEVE BORGIA
INDIAN HERITAGE MUSEUM
 INDECO HOTELS

SEATS OF POWER & PLEASURE

TURNED ROSEWOOD CHAIRS
 Of CONNEMARA PUBLIC LIBRARY



Bobby Robert Bourke Connemara’s dream public library took shape on March 22, 1890 with the laying of a foundation stone. Architect Henry Irwin offered his services. The library building was inaugurated six years later. Feeling a need to bookmark this important part of history, in 1896, the library was officially inaugurated as “Connemara”, a tribute to the man who envisioned the library. The years took its toll on the intricate paintings on the ceilings and the exquisite glass paintings. Even the brilliance of the Indo-Saracenic architecture dulled with time.

Notice the famous colonial revival or Brewster chairs stylized very closely to Victorian Savonarola chairs of late 1800s. The Connemara library got filled with these chairs. Hundreds in numbers. In early 1900, they were gifts from the benevolent hands of Her Majesty, the Queen herself. Discarded to accommodate the renaissance revival cushion chairs in the palace and the royal institutions, four hundred of these chairs sailed to the then Madras Presidency and got housed in the Connemara Public Library. Notice the CPL. 141 inscribed on the chair. The then Arch Bishop of Madras took away a few of these chairs to his official residence.

The chairs have stood the test of time and were auctioned as damaged furniture around the year 2000. This English turned rosewood resembles the iron wood of Asia. The damaged furniture have been acquired and carefully restored and placed here as a part of The STEVE BORGIA INDIAN HERITAGE MUSEUM. This piece of royal history is now exhibited at INDeco’s Lake Forest Hotel, Yercaud.

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SWAMIMALAI
 1896 TANJORE VILLAGE

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 1820’s British Camping Site

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COLONIAL FURNITURE

THE VICTORIAN CUPBOARD



This Victorian cupboard is indeed unique because it is structured Victorian and contains Gothic features as well in terms of details. The Victorian Age (1837-1901) was a time when the past was plundered for design ideas. A great eclectic mix of styles came together with influences including the Rococo, the Baroque, the Neoclassical and the Gothic. This royal piece of colonial furniture was once housed in the Victoria House in Calcutta. It's hard to believe that all the Gothic pillars are manually carved. Yet, so very identical.

A decision of Lord Wellesley in 1798 to build a magnificent new government house in Calcutta in Bengal to represent British authority

in India. The design he chose was based upon one of Robert Adam's greatest neo-classical residences, Lord Valentia, who witnessed its inaugural ceremony said, "A noble structure, although not without faults in the architecture; and, upon the whole not unworthy of its destination. and the sums expended upon it. India is a country of splendor, of extravagance and of outward appearances; that the Head of a mighty Empire (Wellesley) ought to conform himself to the prejudices of the country he rules over...In short, I wish India to be ruled from a palace, not from a counting house; with the ideas of a Prince, not with those of a retail dealer in muslins and indigo". Lord Valentia's remark only mirrors the Queen's concern for the locals and their culture.

This Victorian cupboard was sourced in Orissa in 1998 and restored by Madras craftsmen and listed in The STEVE BORGIA INDIAN HERITAGE MUSEUM.

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THE WINDS OF THE BRITISH RAJ

KEROSENE LAMP FANS

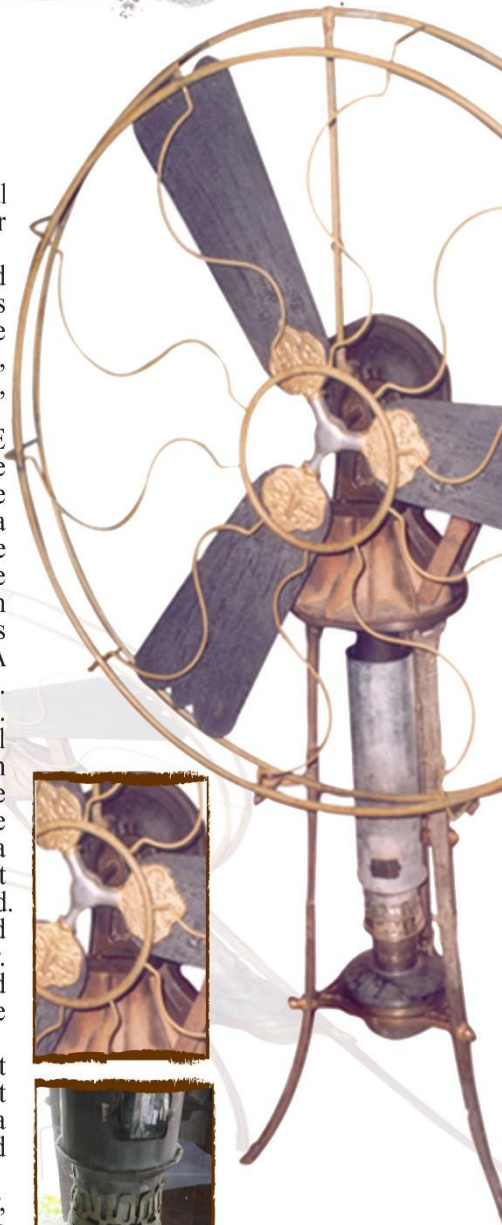
Interestingly, world over, much of mechanical inventions happened in the 1800s. So was it for fans.

The kerosene operated fans emerged in the mid 1800s. In fact they need to be referred as kerosene lamp fans. This piece of art was one of the earliest to be introduced by ALADDIS, which operated out of Greenford in Middlesex, GB. And was patented with No. 694273/4.

The STEVE BORGIA INDIAN HERITAGE MUSEUM at INDeco Hotels Swamimalai, the 1896 Tanjore Village, contains a few of these original models. Kerosene fans appeared in a variety of models. The most popular ones were the table model, the stand model and the overhead model. Further, there were even centrally generated models. For today's generation it could appear to be magic. A typical kerosene lamp is positioned at the base. When lit, heats up the oil in the cylinder above. When the oil gets heated, the mechanical device starts moving (typical to that of a steam rail engine wheel). This mechanism moves the blades of the fan. They rotate at an unbelievable speed. INDeco Hotels Swamimalai, exhibits a variety of these models. INDeco's Lake Forest Hotel has one of the best available in the world. This kerosene lamp operated fan was sourced from the Yercaud region, a left behind by Mr. Victor C. H. Tate (Born 21st July 1912 – Died 2nd May 1998), who in the 1940s managed the Kombuthooki estate in Yercaud.

This fan exhibited at INDeco's Lake Forest Hotel is one of the last of its kind in Yercaud. It was, gifted to Mrs. Tate (Flossy) by Henrietta Charlotte Rosario, also resident of Yercaud (1857-1940).

It is also believed that it was Mr. Tate's father, who brought the electricity into Yercaud from Salem, that threw away such beautiful hand crafted gadgets. This kerosene lamp operated fan forms a part of The STEVE BORGIA INDIAN HERITAGE MUSEUM .



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PICNIC GOVERNANCE

ROYAL PICNIC HAMPER

Among the then Viceroy houses, today's Rashtrapathi Bhawan, Delhi, was the largest palace built in the 20th century. This had the largest Edwardian kitchen in the world.



In terms of culinary trivia, the 1911 coronation was a high point in British cooking, when legendary Chef August escoffier's menu in London included Caviar, Turtle Soup, roast chicken George V and peaches Queen Mary. The East India Company Officers lived the Aura of the Victorian passion to the very last word. The Officers in short, made Britain the most portable commodity on earth whether at work, war, picnic or while hunting deep in the jungle. They always carried this part of England with them as though it was the Queen's perpetual order. This Royal Picnic Hamper is fitted with locking systems and underlined with an inner lining of waterproof cloth. Most often it was the Glasgow Mull. And they contained in them, fine China bone ware, teacups, cheese knives, jam pots, milk pots, crystal stemware. Some sophisticated ones even contained a thermos flask. Of course, plates, side plates, saucers are a part of the pack. Interestingly, the crockery and cutlery for the gentlemen had red edgings and those for the ladies contained blue edgings. It is claimed to be a 1911 Delhi Durbar left behind and it was to be a part of the personal belonging of the Rahm family in Yercaud. The family that once operated the Tiperary Hotel, Yercaud through the Dickens.

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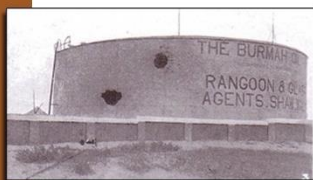


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MACHINERY & THE MADRAS PRESIDENCY

OIL EXTRACTOR



A beautifully crafted machine, hit by war, salvaged for art. A victim of the September 22, 1914 bombardment of Madras while in the Burmah oil company stock yard Bungalow in the possession of its agent Mr. Shah.

One R. S. Vasudeva Shenoy, a Gowd Saraswathi Brahmin clan, fled Goa to escape the Portuguese religion persecution and took asylum in the Island of Vypeen that belonged to the then state of Cochin. The family soon set up an oil extraction business. By mid 1800s, their oil mill could crush 50 tons of Copra and extract 6 tons of oil in just 12 hours of work. And used about 10,000 coconut trees. This product was dispersed through European merchants in Cochin.

Most of their mills were wooden crushers and some driven manually. The large ones in stone were driven by bullocks. The oil extractor exhibited here was a gift to Mr. Jogiah Kamath, the capable manager of Shenoy's family business by an European buyer. The machine arrived on the shores of Vypeen much before electricity hit the island. The machine served the Shenoy mills as a sampler and was later condemned. The machine was spotted in the back yard of the Shenoy mills by an agent of Burmah oil and for sheer beauty carried it to the Madras Presidency by one Mr. Shah. The iron balls and the bearing would reveal that the crusher was in minimal use, while its funnels and the exterior dictate the wear and tear of junkyard life for longer years. It was personally spotted by Mr. Steve Borgia in the year 2000 and brought into the collection after minimal restoration. As a new machine from Europe it is said to have been exhibited at the Industrial and agricultural exhibition in Cochin during the days of the British Raj.

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ENGLISH HOUSEHOLD

KEROSENE REFRIGERATOR



Practical household refrigerators were introduced in 1915 and gained wider acceptance in the United States in the 1930's as prices fell and non-toxic, non-flammable synthetic refrigerants such as Freon or R-12 were introduced. Here is the evolution history: In 1922, Swedish engineering students, Balzar von Platen and Carl Munters, from the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, presented a

sensational invention - a machine that produces cold through heat, using a new and brilliant application of the absorption process. The machine can be driven by electricity, gas or Kerosene.

1923- The production of refrigerators based on Platen Munter's invention begins at a newly formed company, AB Arctic.

1925- Electrolux purchases Arctic and launches the first absorption refrigerator, the "D-fridge" on the world market. For many people "this wonderful box" solves the problem of storing food at home.

1927- Electrolux built vacuum cleaner plants in Luton, England and Courbevoie, France. Production begins in a number of countries all over the world.

In 1936, Electrolux manufactured its one-millionth refrigerator. The refrigerator exhibited here is one of them; works even today and is kerosene operated. This fridge has been sourced from the family of Sri. Dhanraja Pillai who functioned as a Document writer in the office of the Deputy Collector of Tanjore and is now housed in INDeco Hotels Swamimalai near Tanjore.

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Anglo - French Credo & the British Coat of Arms

The credo of the order of the Garter, the oldest and highest knighthood in all of Britain, King Edward III founded the order of the Garter as “society, fellowship and college of the knights”. The foundation year was presumed to be 1348. Honi Soit qui Mal y Pense, speaks of the early Anglo-French relations. The French translates it fittingly as ‘shame on him who thinks ill of it’. The French motto on the British coat of arms is ‘Dieu et Mon Droit’, ‘God and My Right’. It is a reminder of French as the preferred language of the English Court since the middle ages. May the ANGLO – FRENCH spirit revive and live long.

Interestingly, soon after the founding of the order, women were appointed “Ladies of the Garter”, but were not made companions. King Henry VII discontinued the practise in 1488, his mother Margaret Beaufort, was the last lady of the Garter before Queen Alexandra.

Interestingly, the emblem is said to have had its seat on the facia of Fort St. George during the days of the British rule. Unceremoniously unseated during the late 50’s by the then Government of Madras.

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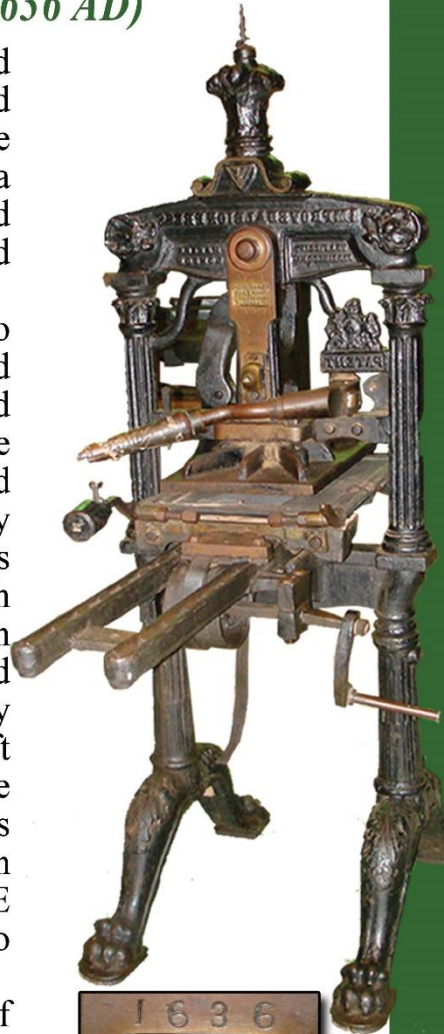
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PREACHING PRESSES

ALBION PRINTING PRESS (1636 AD)

This improved Albion mono colour hand iron press was manufactured in 1636 and patented in 1883. Most of the administrative work in the early days of the British in India was in writing. While the Indians used local vegetable colour ink, the English used inks and stationery brought from London. Printing presses initially came to India to meet the missionary work in line with Lord Maculay's report, when the British believed the only way to break the unity and colonise India would be to break her culture and religion. Therefore, conversion to Christianity was a major initiative by British. This single colour press was used by the British in Ooty, their summer capital. It was then considered to be a very modern unit and therefore served in the office of the Viceroy as "Confidential Document Printer". It left Ooty in early 1900's and served the Tarangambadi settlements missionary press in and around Tanjore and later got listed in the STEVE BORGIA INDIAN HERITAGE MUSEUM and is showcased at INDeco Hotels Mahabalipuram.

Trade marked by V&J Figgins of Farringdon Road in London, this piece of art stands as a fine example of the hand press printing technology which served the world's printing needs for over 300 years prior to the invention of motorized presses in the early 19th century.



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RAJ DAYS

PALANQUIN

The Beginning of Inequality Among Humans



Palanquins grew out of 'litter' and 'sedan chairs' as early as inequalities set in among humans. A 'litter' is usually carried by people and therefore a type of human-powered transport. Another form, commonly called 'sedan chair', consists of a chair or windowed cabin suitable for a single occupant. These porters were known in London as "chairmen." These have been very rare since the 19th century, but such enclosed portable litters have been used as an elite form of transport for centuries, especially in cultures where women are kept secluded. In pharaonic Egypt and many oriental realms, the ruler and divinities (in the form of an idol) were often transported thus in public.

A palanquin, also known as palkhi, is a covered sedan chair (or litter) carried on two poles. It derives from the Sanskrit word for a bed or couch, presumably via pallakku, the Tamil word for 'bed, couch'.

Palanquins began to fall out of use after rickshaws were introduced in the 1930s.

In Europe, it took four strong chairmen to carry the corpulent Henry VIII of England in his chair, towards the end of his life, but the expression "sedan chair" was not used in print until 1615. It does not seem to take its name from the city of Sedan. The tasteful neoclassical sedan chair made for Queen Charlotte remains at Buckingham Palace. Sedan chairs could pass in streets too narrow for a carriage. By the mid-17th century, sedans for hire were a common mode of transportation. In London, "chairs" were available for hire in 1634, each assigned a number and the chairmen licensed, because the operation was a monopoly of a courtier of Charles I. Sedan chairs were meant to alleviate the crush of coaches in London streets, an early instance of traffic congestion. A trip within a city cost six pence and a day's rental was four shillings. A sedan was even used as an ambulance in Scotland's Royal Infirmary. Benjamin Franklin used a sedan chair until late in the 1700s.

During the 17-18th centuries palanquins were very popular among European traders in Bengal, so much so that in 1758 an order was issued prohibiting their purchase by certain lower-ranked employees.

This original Royal Palanquin has reached here from the English soil and still carries the Royal Insignia. During mid 1900s, the Queen was scheduled to visit the "Brahadeeswara Temple", Tanjore during her visit to the Madras presidency. It is said to be her child hood dream to see for herself the magic of the steeple shadow not touching the ground. A sudden break out of Plague made the authorities cancel the trip. This Palanquin, a property of the British Empire in India was already transported to carry the queen around the temple. But the Palanquin was not taken back. It was in the custody of a trustee of the temple for several years until it was sourced, restored and listed in The STEVE BORGIA INDIAN HERITAGE MUSEUM.

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