



## **THE MEMORIAL**

Victoria Memorial Hall was conceived by Lord Curzon, Viceroy of British India (1899-1905), on the death of Queen Victoria in 1901. It was expected to be a living institution in memory of the Queen with particular emphasis on Indo-British history. Raised on land measuring fifty seven acres, and with contributions obtained from the Indian people of more than a crore rupees in those days, the Memorial was given shape. The foundation stone was laid by H. R. H. George, then Prince of Wales, later George V, on January 4, 1906 and it was formally opened to the public in 1921.

Victoria Memorial has been declared as an Institution of National Importance in 1935. The Memorial building presents an imposing sight. The splendour is evident in its architecture, designed by Sir William Emerson, President of the British Institute of Architects. The architecture of the building is predominantly Italian Renaissance in character, blended with the nuances of Orientalism. The marble and sandstone used in its construction were quarried at Makrana, then in the Jodhpur State. The ornamental group of statues over the entrance porches and the figures surrounding the central dome were executed in Italy. The figure of the Angel of Victory, 16ft. high and weighing 3 tonnes, surmounts the dome and revolves upon its own base. The building is 184ft. high up to the base of the figure of the Angel of Victory.

The group of figures above the north porch represent Motherhood, Prudence and Learning. Surrounding the main dome are figures of Art, Architecture, Justice, Charity etc.

The Memorial Hall represents a visual history constructed with :

- Visuals in oil and watercolour,
- Sketches and drawings,
- Aquatints and lithographs,
- Stamps and postal stationery,
- Coins and medals,
- Arms and armour,
- Books and manuscripts,
- Sculptures
- Costumes
- Personal relics
- Archival documents.



The Memorial in the winter months



Marques Cornwallis, marble statue by John Bacon on view at the Eastern Quadrangle

## THE COLLECTION

The Memorial has a unique collection of paintings by European artists of 18th & 19th centuries. This collection has been further strengthened with the acquisition of paintings by modern Indian artists.

The Memorial is the repository of the largest number of Daniells' paintings in the world.

The Memorial also possesses the third largest painting in the world - Vassili Verestchagin's "The State Procession of the Prince of Wales into Jaipur in 1876".

The Memorial's philatelic collection on Indian postal history is large.

Among other important collections, one may refer to

- Persian manuscripts, some of them beautifully illustrated
- Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb's hand- written Quran
- The Persian translation of the Nala Damayanti by Abul Faiz Faizi
- Dara Shikoh's translation of the Upanishads.
- Arms, Armour, Coins and Medals
- The works of Daniells (Thomas & William), Johann Zoffany, Reynolds, William Hodges, George Chinnery, Robert Home, Thomas Hickey and Tilly Kettle.
- The works of Baltazar Solvyns, Charles D'Oyly, Emily Eden, Samuel Davis and others.
- Qajar Paintings
- The artwork of Abanindranath Tagore and Jamini Roy.

## ARCHIVE

The archive has rare collections, e.g. Justice Hyde's manuscript diary, early colonial documents on 18th and 19th centuries Calcutta / Bengal, land records in Urdu and Persian, and a number of old Supreme Court records.



Pondicherry attacked by the British Fleet, under Admiral Boscawen, 1748, VM Collection

## GALLERIES

A large number of artefacts from the invaluable collections of the Memorial are on display. They are suitably placed in various galleries.

The galleries include

- The Royal Gallery  
(now under repair and renovation)
- Entrance Hall,
- Portrait Gallery,
- Arms & Armour Gallery,
- The Queen's Hall,
- The Prince Hall,
- Daniells' Room,
- Hastings Room,
- National Leaders' Gallery,
- Documents Gallery,
- Calcutta Gallery and
- Durbar Hall.



Bunch of Lobster & Cat with Lobster, on view at Calcutta Gallery

The unique encapsulated history extending over three centuries is preserved with great care. Planned restructuring of the galleries has recently been taken up in order to portray the historical significance of the Memorial in a more attractive visual and descriptive form to more than one million visitors a year. The splendour of the Memorial attracts visitors from all over the country and outside, including a large number of visitors from neighbouring countries of Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. The number of visitors from Europe, North America and Asia is significant.

## LIBRARY

The Library of the Memorial is a special reference library for Indo-British history, history of Calcutta, history of art and conservation, museum studies and management of cultural institutions. The library has a sizeable collection of rare books, which include some important private collections e.g., George Lyell, B.C. Law.

## GARDEN

Apart from the priceless collection displayed in the galleries, Victoria Memorial Hall, Kolkata has a well-maintained picturesque garden with its water-bodies, lawns, gravel pathways, historical busts and a rich collection of around 1700 trees.

The garden is an attraction by itself and attracts nearly 2 million visitors annually. It not only offers a visual treat but also a place that has over the years become a favourite with the young and old for providing them with an opportunity of stimulating their minds. The flora is also an attraction for the students of Botany.



Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar by Atul Bose, Oil on Canvas on view at Calcutta Gallery



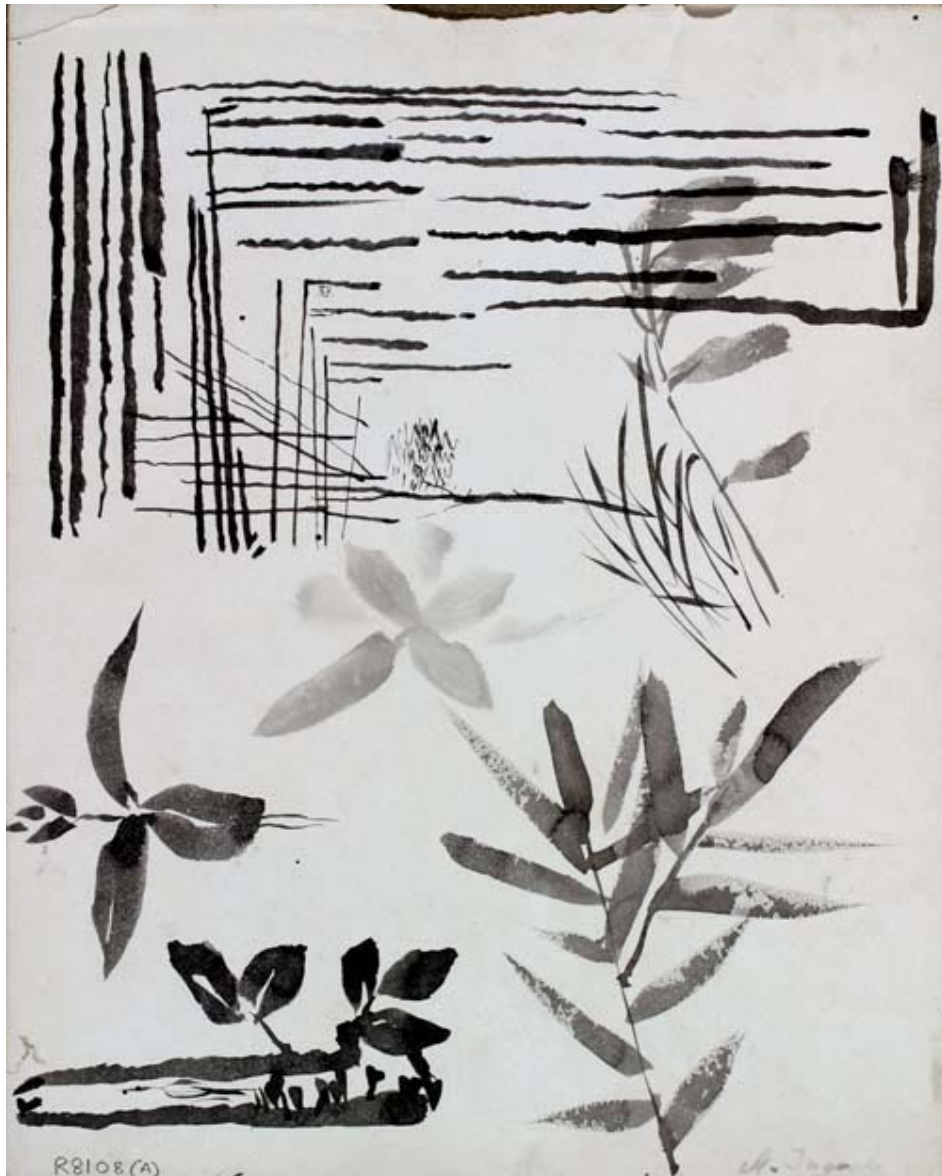
Swami Vivekananda by Prakash Das, Oil on Canvas on view at National Leaders Gallery

The original scheme of the garden of Victoria Memorial Hall was drawn up in 1915 in consultation with Lord Redesdale (acknowledged as the greatest amateur authority on the subject of landscape gardening), Mr. E. White of Messrs. Milner & Co., Landscape Gardeners and Architects and Sir David Prain, Superintendent, Botanical Gardens, Calcutta and Director of Botanical Survey of India.

## ACTIVITIES

Apart from being a museum, Victoria Memorial Hall is increasingly becoming a centre for academic and cultural activities (e.g. seminars, workshops, poets' meet, art camps, sit and draw competitions and exhibitions). It organizes collaborative programmes in and around Kolkata, in the neighbouring districts and also for the north-eastern region of India. The importance of heritage and its preservation, conservation of cultural property, art, aesthetics and cultural identity are promoted through the activities of the different units of the Memorial. The son-ét-lumiere show is appreciated. The Memorial is also drawing increasing number of visitors including school children.

Exhibitions, workshops and seminars are held throughout the year. Attendance has been impressive.



Japanese Style Sketch by A.N. Tagore, Ink on paper, VM Collection

## MANAGEMENT: BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Victoria Memorial Act, (Act X of 1903) and its successive amendments, including the Amendment Act of 1981 and the rules and regulations framed with reference to the Act, governs Victoria Memorial Hall. Victoria Memorial Hall is an institution of national importance under the "administrative control" of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. It is funded by the Govt. of India.

The Act entrusts the management of the Memorial to a Board of Trustees under the Chairmanship of the Hon'ble Governor of West Bengal. The members on the Board of Trustees, during the year, were as follows:

### **Chairman :**

Hon'ble Governor, West Bengal, Shri Gopalkrishna Gandhi.

### **Members (Ex-officio) :**

Shri S. S. Nijjar, Hon'ble Chief Justice, Kolkata High Court (From 07.03.07)

Shri Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharyya, Hon'ble Mayor, Kolkata Municipal Corporation (From 05.07.2005)

Shri Badal Das, Secretary, Department of Culture, Govt. of India.

Shri Abhijit Sengupta, Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India

Shri R. C. Mishra, Financial Adviser, Department of Culture, Govt. of India.

Shri Asok Mohan Chakrabarti, Addl. Chief Secretary to the Govt. of West Bengal, Higher Education Deptt. (From 12.07.2006 to 10.03.2008)

Shri Prasad Ranjan Ray, Addl. Chief Secretary to the Govt. of West Bengal, Higher Education Deptt.

Shri Benjamin Lakra, Accountant General (A&E) West Bengal (From 21.09.2006)

### **Members nominated on the Board of Trustees**

#### **A. Under clause 2(i)(c) of Victoria Memorial Amendment Act 1981, GOI's Notification published on the Gazette of India No. 323 dated 22nd July 2005.**

Smt. Shanta Ghosh

Professor Andre Beteille

Professor Mohammad Amin

#### **B. Under clause 2(i) (i) of the Victoria Memorial Amendment Act, 1981, GOI's notification no. published in the Gazette of India No. 408 dated 22nd September 2005.**

Dr. Pratap Chandra Chunder

Dr. P. C. Mahtab

Professor Barun De

Professor Sabyasachi Bhattacharya.

## **SECRETARY & CURATOR**

The Secretary & Curator is the Chief Executive of the Memorial. Professor C. Panda, D. Phil (Oxon.), took over charge of the post of Secretary and Curator in June, 1995. He had his education in the Universities of Calcutta, Jawaharlal Nehru and Oxford. He was a Professor of History in the University of Burdwan, where he was also the Head of Department. Professor Panda was also a visiting Professor to Maison Des Sciences Del'Homme, Paris. A book, "The Decline of the Bengal Zamindars", authored by him, has been published by the Oxford University Press.

## **MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Three meetings of the Board of Trustees were held at Raj Bhavan, Kolkata on 08.05.2007, 27.07.2007 and 17.12.2007.

At the meetings of the Board of Trustees the following issues were deliberated

- CTT-VMH MoU for the construction of additional visitor facilities at the Memorial.
- NID Master Plan for the modernization of the galleries of the Memorial.
- Utilization of the funds from the Lord Curzon Endowment Fund for the collection of the records pertaining to Raj Bhavan, Kolkata and Victoria Memorial Hall from the British Library in London.
- Recommendations of the Security Committee on the modified survey report submitted by CISF, fire consultancy report by CISF and the expansion of CCTV network in Victoria Memorial Hall and the engagement of CISF with immediate effect.
- Annual Report, Victoria Memorial Hall, 2005-06
- Annual Budget and the Annual Action Plan, Victoria Memorial Hall, 2007-08
- Proposal for the setting up of a sculpture garden in Victoria Memorial Hall and to receive the coat of Arms from Raj Bhavan, Kolkata for reservation and display in the gardens of the Memorial.
- Proposal for an educational and multilingual audio guide service at Victoria Memorial Hall by Narrow Caster (India) Pvt. Ltd.
- Setting up of a Souvenir Shop in Victoria Memorial Hall by India Tourism Development Corporation Ltd.
- Scheme of internship for students in Victoria Memorial Hall.
- Engagement of consultants.
- Permanent Loan of Artefacts from Rabindra Bharati Society, Kolkata to Victoria Memorial Hall.
- Monument Protection Plan for Victoria Memorial Hall by the NEERI.
- CTT Proposal for the construction of Additional visitor facilities at the Memorial.
- Budget, RE 2007-08 and BE 2008-09 including the activities for the north-east region.

- Engagement of an Internal Auditor for Victoria Memorial Hall.
- Credit Co-Operative Society to be formed and managed by the employees of Victoria Memorial Hall.
- Order of the Hon'ble High Court, Calcutta in Writ Petition No. 7987(W) of 2002 in connection with the implementation of the recommendations of the expert committee constituted by the Hon'ble High Court.
- Writ Petition No. 7987(W) of 2002: Direction of the Trustees in the event of the constitution of a committee by the Hon'ble High Court, Calcutta to supervise the implementation of the orders of the Hon'ble High Court.

### **EXECUTIVE AND FINANCE COMMITTEE**

The Executive and Finance Committee of the Memorial comprised of:

#### **Chairman**

The Hon'ble Governor, West Bengal, Shri Gopalkrishna Gandhi.

#### **Members**

Hon'ble Mayor, Kolkata Municipal Corporation,

Financial Adviser, Department of Culture, Govt. of India

Principal Secretary, Higher Education Deptt. Govt. of West Bengal,

Accountant General (A&E), West Bengal,

A representative of the Department of Culture,

Secretary & Curator, Victoria Memorial

### **MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE AND FINANCE COMMITTEE**

No meeting of the executive and Finance committee was held in the year under review.