

History and Acquisitions of Salar Jung Museum Hyderabad-India

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Abstract: *A museum was considered as a temple of the muses-mousein (Greek)¹ up to 15th Century A.D. In Venice, for the first time museum was made available for visitors in 1523 A.D.² In 1625 A.D, a collection of biological specimens and artifacts by John Tradescant and his son at Lamberth, London was made available for public. In India, the first museum was started at Kolkata. The first museum (Government Museum, Chennai) in Tamil Nadu was started in 1851. In India over 750³ museums are present, museums classified as multidisciplinary Museums, Archaeological Museums, Art Museum, Science Museums, Thematic Museums, Personalia Museums etc., The famous Salar Jung Museum is the largest single-family collection in the world. About 20 percent of rare pieces of art was from the collection of his grandfather Sir Salar Jung-I. Salar Jung-III had agents abroad, who sent him catalogues and lists from well-known antique dealers. Besides, being a great collector of antiques, art objects and rare manuscripts, he patronized writers and artists⁶ and encouraged literary and cultural activities. More or less 40 years he devoted his life for enriching his treasures of art, literature and charity.*

Keywords: Artifacts, Auctioneers, Acquisitions, Dealers

Now a days, museums are considered to be Institutions, which preserve the hoary and glorious past through the original materials for posterity besides making the visitors to understand them and enjoy.

Museums today intend to play a lively role not only in collecting and preserving the art and culture of a particular region or community but also in presenting the social and cultural development of mankind by way of exhibiting the original evidence of man's creative genius and his control over nature. Thus a progressive museum today would endeavor to present a coherent story of its contents, impart direct instructions stimulate visitors to learning through seeing and experience.

To achieve this objective, the museums must collect, preserve and interpret the past; correlate it with the modern tendencies and enlighten and entertain the people of all sections of the society. Thus a museum today is a workshop, where things are done; a school, where things are taught; an Academy of higher learning and a place of cultural enjoyment where a visitor may relax from the monotony of every-day life, hard work, and personal anxieties and where he may seek wider horizons.

The history of modern museum-movement is merely two hundred years old. It was roughly between the middle of eighteenth and the beginning of nineteenth centuries that the new concept of "Public Museum" was evolved by the Western European Society. Some of the biggest museums of the world, including the British Museum,⁴ London, owe their existence to this transitional phase. This precision in the policy of collections gave birth to different types of museums i.e., Archaeology, History, Ethnology, Art and Natural History.

The first truly public museum was the in Paris, opened in 1793 during the French Revolution, which enabled for the first time free access to the former French royal collections

for people of all stations and status. The fabulous art treasures collected by the French monarchy over centuries

Next but not less important achievement was a slight improvement in the methods of presentation during this age. The genuine urge for a systematic arrangement and meaningful display of objects, carrying a definite meaning, was emphasized. While describing the museums of the first decade of twentieth century, David Murray writes, "A Museum as now understood, is a collection of monuments of antiquity or other objects interesting to the scholar and the man of Science, arranged and displayed with scientific method⁵". The modern scientific inventions have made the role of a curator more difficult. In addition to collection, preservation, exhibition and research which will, no doubt, be based on the contents of the museum a living museum today has also to discharge the important function of co-operation with the people of its area whose sympathy and support the future of the museum is closely aligned.

A National Museum represents presumably the cultural and artistic growth of a country or race. The government of the country is directly responsible for its finances and administration. It is important for a national museum to include some foreign material in its collection for the purpose of a comparative study of the art and culture of the different peoples in the world. This characteristic of 'Universality' in the acquisitions of a national museum is now considered to be a 'must' by modern musicologists. Some of the National Museums of the world are: The National Art Gallery, London, Muse de Louvre in Paris, -

-The National Gallery, Washington and so on. In India at present, the National Museum, New Delhi, serves as an example. It is a subordinate office of the Ministry of Culture, responsible directly to the Ministry and financed totally by the Government of India. The Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad and the Indian Museum, Kolkata, have likewise been made Institutions of National Importance principally, if not wholly, financed by the Government of India. However,

both the museums have Boards of Trustees, to whom their officers are responsible and thus have a measure of autonomy. The Ministry of Culture has a representative on the Board of Trustees and maintains a lively interest in their development.

Formation of the Salar Jung Museum

Nawab Salar Jung III wanted to construct a permanent building to arrange his objects either at Khwaja Pahadi at Mir Alam Tank or Moula Ali ⁶ (Hyderabad), or sometimes he thought of having a complex at Ooty or Poona. For this purpose, he spent considerable amounts over plans and consulted many architects like Nawab Zain Yar Jung. But unfortunately death claimed him on 2nd March 1949 at the age of 60 leaving behind him a great treasure of rare and varied objects. After his death a committee called “Salar Jung Estate Committee” was formed under a special ordinance of the Government of India with Mr. P.V. Subba Rao as Chairman to administer his property ⁷. One of the members of the Committee was late Professor Hussain Ali Khan, Rector of Osmania University, a close associate of Nawab Saheb and Sri K.M. Vellodi, I.C.S., the then Chief Minister of Hyderabad, who suggested to the Government and the Salar Jung Estate Committee “to arrange the art treasure in a presentable form in an appropriate building accessible to the public”.

The Committee decided to appoint Dr. James Cousins, a well-known art critic as organizer for the museum, who had organized art galleries of Travencore and Mysore. As he was busy, he suggested the name of G. Venkatachalam, as ‘Art Adviser’ to the Salar Jung Museum to tackle the task of arranging a big museum out of a vast mass of art objects from all over the world. With the hearty co-operation and help of Sri R.L. Deviskar ⁸, a life-long artist friend of the late Nawab Saheb and with Mr. Baron’s knowledge on European, China ware and furniture, it was made possible for Sri Venkatachalam to arrange the museum in an artistic manner at Diwan Devdi (residential palace of Salar Jung III). It was declared open to the public on 16th December, 1951. However, the administration of the Museum continued to be vested with the Salar Jung Estate Committee till 1958 when the heirs of Salar Jung graciously agreed, through a compromise deed, to donate the collections to the Government of India. Thereafter, the Museum continued to be administered by the Ministry of Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs, Government of India, till 1961.

In 1961 through an Act of the Parliament⁹, the Museum along the Library was declared as an Institution of National Importance. The administration of the Museum was transferred to an autonomous Board having the Governor of Andhra Pradesh as its Chairman.

The Museum was transferred to the present building specially built for housing the Museum and the Library, in the year 1968¹⁰, the artifacts were displayed according to subject from ceiling to floor but from the year 1978 onwards galleries were renovated and artifacts showcased on eye level according to new display system of Museology with proper Lighting and Labeling, and since 2000 year the galleries were renovated according to International Standards of, ICOM (International Council of Museum) and also taken proper care and preservation.

Acquisition of Artifacts by Museum

Since 1961, the Salar Jung Museum acquired about Five Thousand Artifacts by purchase from various dealers to fill the gap of Salar Jung Collection.

Nawab Salar Jung from his earlier days had inherited from his father and grandfather a love for art and culture, with a strong liking for history, biographies and architecture, particularly of monuments. He was always avid to be au courant with current development in the political, social and cultural fields. His travels wetted these interests. Anyone who conversed with him was impressed by his grasp of current affairs and their historic origins.

Acquisitions of Artifacts by Salar Jung III

Nawab sahib, a man of culture wedded to beauty in nature, arts and crafts, and products of human ingenuity. Wherever he went, in India or abroad, his connoisseur eye picked out an object art of his choice and he strove to acquire whatever the cost. Nawab Salar Jung’s acquisitions enlarged considerably the art legacy of his ancestors which now makes up the Museum. Before the advent of the present museum, Nawab Salar Jung’s art collection was housed in several scattered mansions in and around the city. The bulk, on display in Diwan Ki Deori was much admired; this marked trait for acquisition of art objects touched on earlier can be traced to his youthful days. Dr. Hunt his personal Physician is believed to have encouraged him in his penchant for acquisition of objects art. Even when his Jagir was in the Court of Wards and he had not yet come into it, one gathers from the official records of 1906 that he purchased artifacts worth of Rupees Two Lakhs at the All India Industrial Crafts Exhibition.

Throughout his life he spent a considerable part of his wealth in acquiring paintings, statuary, ancient jewellery, weaponry of historic provenance, books, manuscripts, documents, furniture, calligraphic panel, Chinaware, Bidriware, Jade, cut glass, chandeliers and every manner of art and beauty that appealed to his refined taste. Nawab Salar Jung’s love for collection of artifacts was well known to potential sellers in India and abroad. They kept him well supplied with the details of available artifacts through catalogues and relevant background literature. The Diwan Ki Deori Aina Khana used to be thronged with people who brought a variety of objects art for sale. They came not only from Hyderabad but from Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Rangoon, Allahabad, Shimla, Mussori and Delhi. Some salesman brought articles which had no authentic and intrinsic value. Nawab Salar Jung would patiently examine everything presented to him for sale. His experienced eye quickly detected the true from the false. He had a remarkably preventative memory and knew precisely every little detail of his vast art collection. He could recognize the Calligraphers name from the style of the script.

Sometimes bargaining ensued for an artifact the Nawab Sahib liked and an amicable compromise was arrived at. Payment was made on the spot. Nawab Salar Jung never delayed in the discharge of obligations, which was one of his salient qualities.

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Poona 2nd October
1937

Highness,

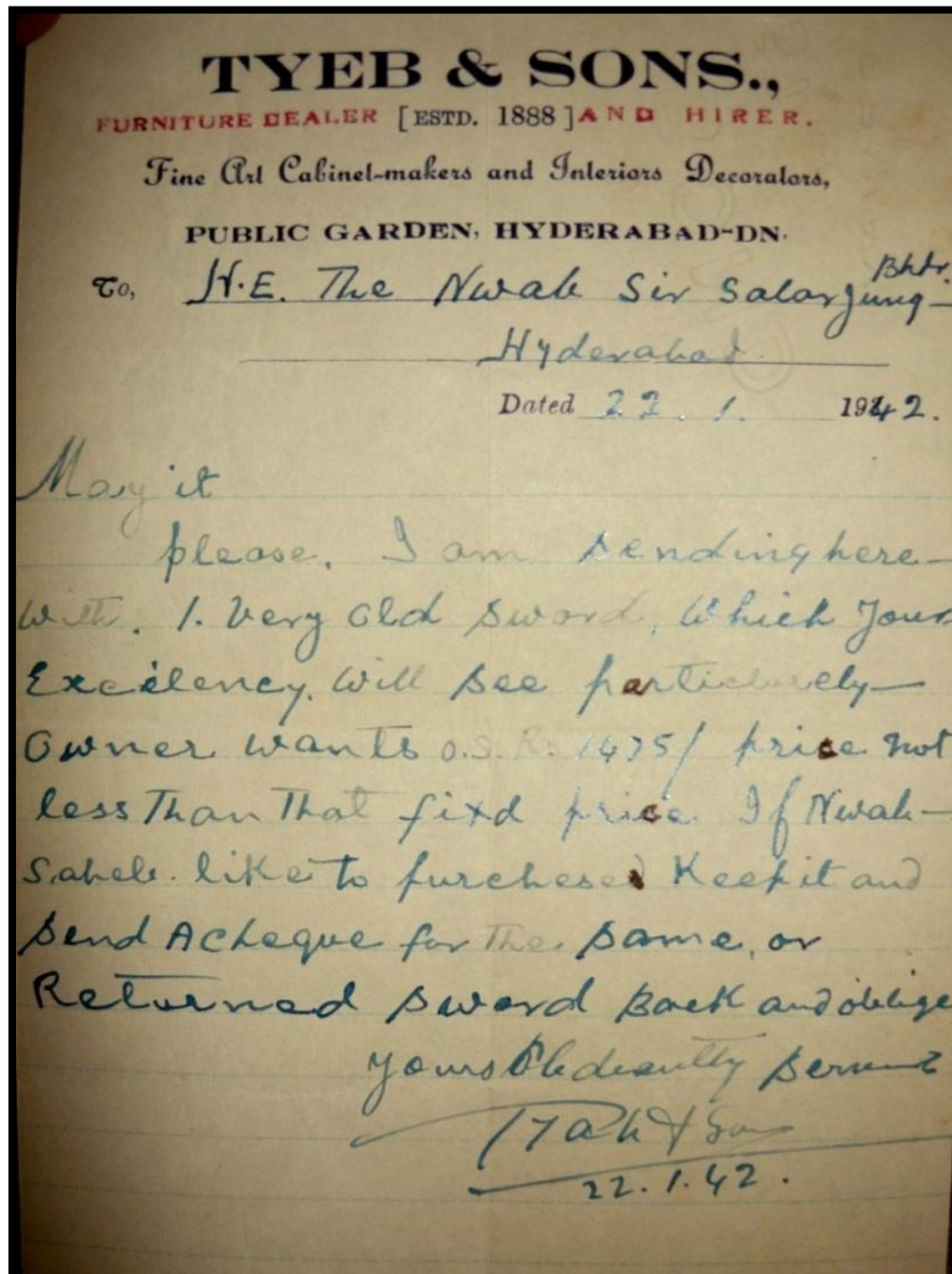
I have the Honour to bring to your Highness' Knowledge, that I possess a few rare Persian manuscripts and miniatures of early dates, which I shall be pleased to show to your Highness.

I may add, that I am a Persian of Teheran and have been for several years in Europe where as an amateur I have been doing research works on Persian art and Literature.

Hoping to receive the favour of an appointment at your kind convenience

Your most obedient servant
R. Hormozdiar

R.Hormozdiar a Persian, offering a few rare Persian Manuscripts and Miniatures to Nawab Salar Jung-III, dated 2nd October 1937.



Tyeb & Sons, Furniture Dealer, Hyderabad, 1942. A Letter to Salar Jung III, regarding “A Very Old Sword” wants to sale at Rs.1475.(Source:Andhra Pradesh State Archives and Research Institute, Tarnaka, Hyderabad).

Nawab Salar Jung's experience in detecting the intrinsic worth and value of an artifact brought to him for sale can be judged from this amusing incident. In Diwan Ki Deori, Jeweller came along with a diamond which he wanted to sale Nawab Salar Jung told his staff to tell him that he was busy but the man insisted on seeing him immediately, Nawab Salar Jung came out and on examining the piece. And asked the cost of jewel, jeweler said “sircar should decide the price” Salar Jung said Rs.500/- then the Jeweler said “Sircar hiray ki Qadar tu Jauhari Janta Hai, aap tu Jauhariyoun ke Jankari hain. He ordered the dealer to be Nawab Sahib's orders, a bowl of water was brought and the diamond was immersed. Within minutes it dissolved. The artist fell at Nawab Sahib's feet and begged to be forgiven for the hoax he had tried to perpetrate. Nawab Salar Jung told him “I had offered Rs. 500/- for your dexterity and

craftsmanship in reproducing an imitation of original. I knew from the beginning its composition. Take your 500/- and be gone”.

For his foreign acquisitions, he relied on catalogues sent from abroad by his agents who helped him pick and choose. What he picked out was communicated to the agents who negotiated the deal. The object purchased was parceled to Hyderabad. What caught his eye on his travels was often acquired on the spot. This continuing process of art acquisitions persisted almost daily throughout his life's the above mentioned processes may be considered the genesis of Nawab Salar Jung's art treasure house immortalizing his name.

One of his last acquisitions consisted of ivory chairs which had been presented to Tipu Sultan of Mysore by the Louis

XV king of France. These arrived in Hyderabad after Nawab Salar Jung's death and are on display in the Museum's Ivory Gallery. Although he never visited the United States of America, he acquired through agents from across the Atlantic furniture, silverware and porcelain toys, and the latter for his nephew Kazim Nawaz Jung Ali Pasha.

It has already been mentioned that during his tours and travels abroad, a considerable part of his art collection was acquired. For instance in London he would visit Christies and on one occasion he acquired curios worth Five Thousand pounds. During his visit to Japan he purchased objects of art of the Ming and Sung dynasties. Similarly during his Middle Eastern tours he bought numerous precious art objects, calligraphy, manuscripts, Egyptian Statuary, Syrian furniture, metal utensils, ancient weaponry, incense burners, oil paintings and from Iran dealers famed carpets of Kashan. While in Europe in 1934, a cut glass vase was presented to him by Crystal Exposition at Bratislava, Czechoslovakia. The same year he made extensive purchases of clocks, paintings and porcelain in France and Germany.

The dealers from whom Nawab Salar Jung purchased curios their address list is given below.

Indian Dealers

Dealers from Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Rangoon, Allahabad, Mussoorie, Shimla, Delhi & Hyderabad payed him periodical visits, bringing with them rare pieces. The principal dealers were..

1. P. ORR & SONS¹¹
Diamond Merchants,
Jewellers and Silversmiths,
Madras and Rangoon.
2. Rai Budree Das Bahadoor and Sons,
Mookins and Court Jewellers,
Mookim Niwas, 152, Harrison Road, Calcutta.
3. The Amulet Glare Protector
Inventors and Patentees
Lawrence and Mayor
London, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Rangoon.
4. The International Art Gallery
Jewellers and Diamond merchants
(Proprietors: N. Perry and Co.)
25, Chowringhee
Y.M.C.A Buildings
Bombay.
5. Army and Navy Co-Operative Society Limited
Incorporated in England
Esplanade Road, Bombay.
6. Marcks and Co. Ltd
Bombay Establishment
43, Esplanade Road
Opposite the Clock Towers, Bombay.
7. John Burton
Tailor and Outfitter,
Ladies Costumes and Habit Maker
(by Sp.App. To H.H. the Nizam, G.C.S.I)
Hyderabad.
8. J. C. Bechtler Sons and Co
Helevetia" Allahabad & Mussoorie
Manufacturing Silversmiths, Jewellers,
Wathcmakers, Engravers, Electroplate

- and Opiticians.
9. Messers, Ganeshi Lall & Son, No.13, Dirummond Road, Agra & the Mall, Simla.
10. S. Frankel Artist Photographer, Trimulgherry Hyderabad Deccan, India.
11. James Ani & Co, James Street, Secunderabad.
12. Bodham Pile & Co, Madras.
13. Moser Auctioner, Bombay.
14. Cusdar & Sons, Bombay.
15. Japanese Museum, Poona & Bombay.
16. Ram Sagar Lal Jeweller, Abid Road, Hyderabad.

Foreign Dealers

Nawab Salar Jung's reputation as an art collector attracted leading international Art and Antiquities dealers who kept him constantly updated on the antique markets, special sales and other opportunities as they arose. He was well supplied in sales and specialized catalogues coming in from all over the world. He selected the objects and made the orders through his agents. Foreign art dealers like Christies and Southbuy auctioners of London spared no effort to keep him informed regularly about their sales. He would go through the catalogues studying each minute details of the item in question, often through a magnifying glass. The agent would be contacted immediately if the object caught his eye.

The following foreign dealers were responsible for his acquisitions:

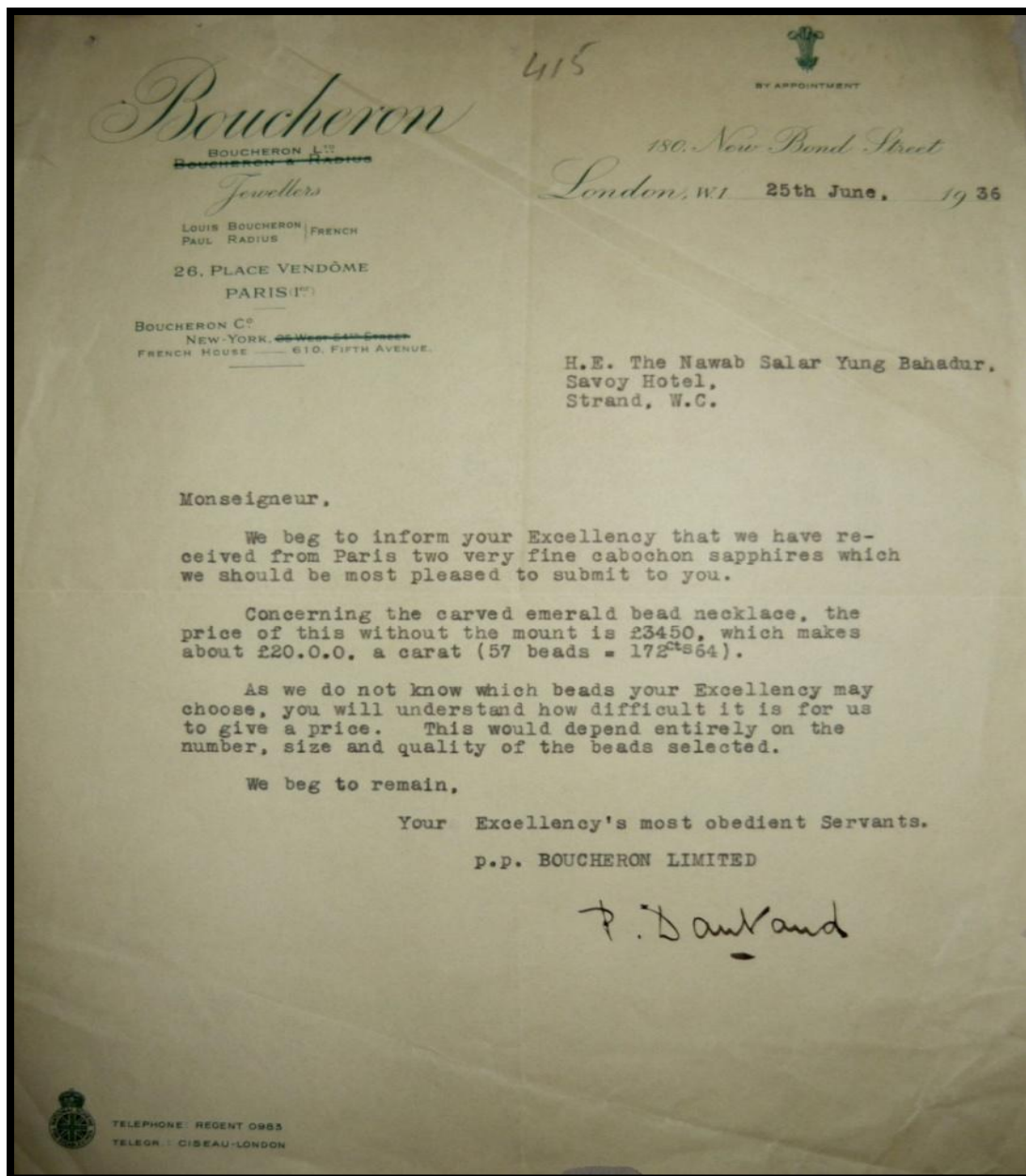
- 1) Wilson and Gil, London.
- 2) Christie's Auctioners, London.
- 3) Nationl Association of Artist Florence, Italy.
- 4) Maple and Company.
- 5) M Harris and Sons, London.
- 6) F.V.C Osler Ltd, Birmingham.
- 7) Boosey and Co. Military Band instrument manufactures, London 295, Regent Street.
- 8) F and C. Osler Ltd.
- 9) Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and Delhi.
- 10) Manufacturers and Electical Engineers.
- 11) O. Sullivan Dealers in Japanese Fine Art¹²
- 12) James Renny and Co.

Acquisition through Auctioners

Salar Jung was a frequent visitor of local auction halls on constant look out for antiques and rare objects of art, he kept his informants and agents posted at all sites of interest so that no opportunity would be missed. On being informed of the arrival of newstock in the auction hall or sale, he would personally visit the site, inspect the object and instruct his representative to acquire the object of his choice at any cost. Shrewd and well experienced in the art of negotiation, he had a clear idea about the value of the sold objects. Once his decision was made, there was no question of going back which was for him beneath dignity. His principal auctioneers were:

- 1) Benneth Auction hall, Bombay,
- 2) J. Moosa in Diwan Devdi,
- 3) Rahim Khan Auction hall, Opposite Viccaji Hotel, at Abid Road,
- 4) Abdul Aziz Auction hall near Paradise, Secunderabad.
- 5) Variety of textiles, ornaments, dresses and musical instruments from the Delhi stall:
- 6) Bidriware utensils.

- 7) Painted textile and Kalamkari of Parbahani and Medak.
- 8) Aurangabad Kim Khawab, Himroo, Karchubi and Zari textile, Papermache, fall of sarees and floral motifs.
- 9) Items of silver from Gulbarga.
- 10) Wooden Toys and Dolls of Nizamabad.
- 11) Textiles of Osmanabad
- 12) Earthen Toys and Dolls of Raichur
- 13) Old Utensils, Parchment, Leather Mask and Fire arms from Bihar
- 14) Carpets, edged arems, and Silver articles of Warangal.
- 15) Rumals from Birnji gill.
- 16) Clay pots and toys from Nalgonda.
- 17) Filigree work, Silverware and lamps of Karimnagar.
- 18) Wooden toys, engraved Wooden Panels, metallic objects like knives, scissors, nut crackers, Woolen brocades of Adilabad.
- 19) Toys and dolls from Koppal.
- 20) Metal utensils, Jewellery, clocks and watches from Madras.
- 21) Chandeliers, cut glass objects and zari textiles from Bombay.
- 22) Jewellery, embroidered textile, kamdani on chicken, earthen huqqa from Delhi.
- 23) Banarasi sari decorated with beautiful zari work.
- 24) Jade inlaid artifacts from the artisans of Agra.
- 25) Rare edged arms, copper and brass Utensils and toys of Jaipur.
- 26) Woollen shawls of Amritsar.
- 27) Rare porcelain objects, watercolour paintings, filigree work of Cuttack.



A Receipt of Foreign Dealer “Boucheron Jewellers” London, 1936. (Source: Andhra Pradesh State Archives and Research Institute, Tarnaka, Hyderabad)

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