

Navrang India: World famous Arcot diamonds of Indian origin - a symbol of regal power

---



Arcot diamonds of India



Queen Charlotte



Queen Charlotte, wife of king George III



King George III

Above image: :George III (George William Frederick; 4 June 1738[c] – 29 January 1820) was the ruler of Great Britain and Ireland from 25 October 1760 until the union of the two kingdoms on 1 January 1801; later he was King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland until his death in 1820.....

The Arcot diamonds get their name from the owner - the Nawob of Arcot, now in South India who ruled between 1761 and 1818 during the time of Charlotte of Mecklenburg, wife of King George III (1760-1820) and Queen Consort of the United Kingdom. The Nawabs were the official agents of the Delhi Mughal empire in the Carnatic region from 1692 to 1744. However, they were more or less independent rulers on their own headed by Nawob Anwaruddin Muhammad Khan from 1744 to 1749. The ruler was under the spell of European influence initially under the French from 1749 to 1855, and subsequently the British influence became a key factor from 1752 to 1855 in the areas of civil and military assistance.

The Nawobs of Arcot, the rulers of the kingdom in the Carnatic region of Tamil Nadu were reasonably rich and had a large collection of jewelry and precious stones. In 1777, the ruler presented one of the valuable diamonds then to Queen Charlotte as a token of the Nawob's loyalty and allegiance -

a sort of "Nazrana" in Urdu to the English Crown. It was an expression of gratitude to the British company for their timely military assistance against the French aggression backed by their local Indian allies during their most tested period of their rule. However, the British were ungrateful to the generous ruler Nawob Muhammad Ali Khan Wala-Jah (1752 to 1795) when he was unable to pay heavy debts - the annual fee of military help - £160,000.00 incurred as a result of military assistance provided by the British and for the restoration of throne and kingdom from Chanda Sahib and his French ally.

To compensate unpaid heavy debts, the British East India Company, under duress, took over the kingdom of the Carnatic, forcing the rich Nawob royal family to become a mere titular ruler, receiving one-fifth of the total revenue of the State for the maintenance of his palaces. The British cunningly shared the major portion of the pie. A diabolical diplomacy they had been following since the take over of Bengal in the late 1700s.



**Arcot Nawob Muhd Ali Khan Wala-Jah(1752 to 1795)**

The Arcot diamonds of Golconda origin (Kollur diamond mines) were made of five brilliant pieces, out of which only the first two were of appreciable sizes, and were antique oval or pear-shaped, colorless or near-colorless diamonds with the larger one weighing 33.70 carats and smaller one 23.65 carats.

In the late eighteenth century Britain's George III and his consort Charlotte received lots of precious stones and jewels from rich Indian princes and also from the greedy directors of the East India Company that they were dubbed them as "diamond eaters". When it came to diamonds, precious stones and jewelry, both George III and his consort Charlotte were greedy and grasping, their rapacity was sky-high. After making a strong foothold in India and with the rise of their military power, influence and dominance the British Monarchy began to build up a vast collection of valuable crown jewels mostly looted from the Indian continents masquerading

as gifts from the Indian rulers. In this sense, India became a main source of valuable stones, for the British royal family etc. Besides, after the acquisition of vast Indian subcontinent, India became a perennial source of revenue for the once poor England. In reality "India was the jewel in the crown" of their empire.

Queen Charlotte died in the year 1818 and her legal heirs, as per her will with respect to diamonds, were her four daughters. Rundell & Bridge, who in 1804, were appointed jewelers and silversmiths to the Crown by King George III. However, after the death of George III, George IV, for some reason appropriated the jewelry and other valuables of his parents. Ultimately the diamonds were set in a crown for King George IV. The same Arcots were later set in the Crown of Queen Adelaide, the consort of William IV, the successor to King George IV. At auction the Arcots sold to

the first Marquess of Westminster, as a birthday gift for his wife Eleanor for a price of £10,000.00 ( June 20, 1837, 19 years after the death of Queen Charlotte, in London). Eleanor used the Arcot diamonds in its original setting as drop earrings. The diamonds remained with the family for almost 100 years. In the year 1930, 2nd Duke of Westminster, Hugh Richard Arthur Grosvenor saw to it Arcot diamonds together with 32.20-carat round brilliant-cut and other numerous small diamonds were mounted on the famous Westminster Tiara.

To meet the financial burden incurred as a result of wars, etc the tiara was put up for auction by the 3rd Duke of Westminster at Southey's London. In June, 1959. Harry Winston, the New York City jeweler, was the buyer of the tiara at the auction - £110,000.00, a world record price for a single piece of jewelry at that time. He later dismantled, the Arcot diamonds from the tiara (the original diamonds suspended from a bar brooch after dismounting from the Westminster Tiara) reset them after some re-cut and modification on two separate ring and sold them to two rich buyers from Texas. Thus the diamond was re-cut after 182 years,

In November 1993 the Van Cleef & Arpels acquired the larger of the two Arcots, the Arcot I, weighing 31.01 carats. In the early 1990s, the necklace with the pear-shaped Arcot I diamond changed hands for a price of £918,243.00. Sheik Ahmed Hassan Fitaihi, the renowned Saudi Arabian jeweler, who was an ardent collector and connoisseur of diamonds, was a successful buyer.