



Celebrating the Power of Words

National Dictionary Day, observed on October 16, celebrates the power of words and the importance of dictionaries in our daily lives. Established to honour Noah Webster, whose 1828 dictionary helped standardize American English, the day encourages literacy, learning, and curiosity about language. It's a reminder of how dictionaries serve as invaluable tools, not just for definitions, but for understanding etymology, pronunciation, and context. Schools, libraries, and language enthusiasts mark the occasion with activities like word games, spelling bees, and vocabulary challenges, emphasizing that expanding one's lexicon enriches communication, knowledge, and cultural connection across generations.

#ORIGINS

Coca-Cola

How Coca-Cola began as a Stimulant over 125 years ago!



Coca-Cola is one of the most iconic beverages worldwide, known today as a sweet, fizzy soda enjoyed by millions. But what many people don't realize is that when Coca-Cola was first created more than 125 years ago, it was originally marketed and consumed as a stimulant and medicinal tonic rather than a simple soft drink.



Carnatic region.



But life was not easy for him. He was frequently at war with the Mysore kings and the Tanjore Marathas. The British, his allies, agreed to supply him with both weapons and soldiers, but at a cost. Soon, Wallajah ended up owing them outrageous sums of money for the hardware and out-sourced manpower! Yet, Wallajah did not let petty accounting interfere with his business of noblesse oblige. He generously contributed to public causes.

One of the many ways in which the British East India Company gained control over various regions of India was by forging advantageous friendships with local rulers and getting involved in internal politics. And some conquests were made simply through financial wheeling and dealing. The British came to Madras (modern Chennai) in 1689. By the 18th century, they controlled large parts of the south-eastern coast of India. The Carnatic region, though, was ruled independently by the Nawab of Arcot, Muhammad Ali Khan Wallajah. He became great friends with the British in the 1750s, after they helped him acquire larger territories by defeating his rivals during the Siege of Arcot in 1751. Indeed, Nawab Wallajah was not only a dignified gentleman but also a fascinating one. He descended from a long line of Mughal Governors. Although he was the legal heir of the seventh Nawab of Arcot, Anwaruddin Khan, he assumed power as the ninth Nawab. Before he could lay his claim to the throne, a relative of his, by the name of Chanda Sahib, usurped it and became the de facto eighth Nawab. Wallajah battled for three years between 1749 and 1752 to dislodge the pretender; and the British

ing ingredients now known to have medicinal or stimulating effects. Pemberton's formula combined coca leaf extract and kola nut extract, two key ingredients known for their stimulating properties. The coca leaf provided cocaine alkaloids, which were common in many medicines of the era, while kola nuts contributed caffeine. This combination gave the beverage its stimulating punch.

America. At the time, cocaine was legal and widely used in many products, including medicines, tonics, and even wines. It was not until the early 20th century that the negative effects of cocaine became better understood and the substance was removed from consumer products. Coca-Cola officially eliminated cocaine from its formula by 1904, switching to 'spent' coca leaves that had the cocaine alkaloids removed, but still retained flavor.

helps increase alertness and reduce fatigue. Combining the effects of cocaine and caffeine made Coca-Cola a potent energizer when it first came to market.

The Role of Caffeine from Kola Nuts

Along with coca leaves, the kola nut was another essential stimulant in the original recipe. The kola nut contains caffeine, a well-known natural stimulant that

From Medicine to Refreshing Beverage

Over the decades, as regulations around cocaine tightened and the beverage industry evolved, Coca-Cola gradually transformed from a medicinal tonic into a mainstream soft drink. The formula was altered, marketing shifted towards refreshment and enjoyment, and the drink became a symbol of American culture and lifestyle rather than a health cure. Despite these changes, the stimulant origins of Coca-Cola remain an intriguing part of its history, a reminder of how consumer tastes and regulations evolve over time. Coca-

Cola's early days as a stimulant tonic reflect the social and scientific context of the late 19th century, when stimulants like cocaine and caffeine were common ingredients in medicines. The drink's original purpose was far from the simple soda we know today; it was designed to invigorate and heal. Today, while the formula has changed and caffeine remains the primary stimulant, Coca-Cola's legacy as a once medicinal tonic offers a fascinating glimpse into the history of beverages, medicine, and consumer culture over a century ago.

'Protection' At A 'Price'

So, what happened to the Arcot Interest? Well, they were British subjects. So, once the company took over, whoever could produce evidence of their loans to the Nawab was paid the sum, out of the British coffers. The Nawab had signed Bonds acknowledging his debt and mortgaging lands. There had been a brisk trade in the Bonds themselves in the Madras and London financial markets. That is when they discovered another interesting fact. Nearly 90% of the Bonds were forgeries. If you thought financial wheeling and dealing was a recent phenomenon, think again!

#CHEATERS



Siege of Arcot.



Hyder Ali, a steel engraving from the 1790s.

the Srirangam and Triplicane Parthasarathy Temples. He donated land to the Mylapore Kapali Temple for building a tank. Even today, during the annual Float Festival of that tank, his descendants are honoured first. He also donated land to Christian institutions such as the Bishop Heber School in Trichy. Indeed, in charity, he was truly secular. But by now, Wallajah was quite bankrupt. Secular charity needed secular funding. So, he borrowed heavily from all.

Wallajah lived like a king, gave like a king, and died like a king. Unfortunately, he left behind huge debts that made his descendants vulnerable. The British exploited this and took over his kingdom by fair and foul means. However, they could not completely ignore his friendship. Even today, his descendant sports the honorary title of 'Prince of Arcot' and receives a tax-free pension from the government of India.

The Siege of Arcot
But everything has a price: the British demanded exorbitant rates



A realistic portrait of Haidar Ali.

for their 'protection.' £160,000 per year to be exact. (At current rates, it was roughly the equivalent of GBP 45 million, or INR 482 million, an enormous number!)

The Carnatic region

In 1779, the British seized the French port of Mahe from Hyder Ali, the King of Mysore. Hyder Ali already hated the Nawab because of his friendship with the British. The seizure of Mahe infuriated him and he declared war against the Nawab. So, in 1780, the Nawab again approached the British East India Company for help. They agreed to provide him with an army in exchange for the rights to collect revenue from his lands till the end of the war. The British were effectively the new landlords, and the Nawab, just their tax collector. The Nawab was quite rich and so were his lands. But with most of the revenues going to the British, and the war proving to be quite long drawn out, the Nawab found himself floundering financially.

The Nawab never compromised on his royal style despite the financial stress. Soon, he owed huge sums to the British East India Company. When he ran out of money to pay the British, he started taking loans from individual employees of the British East India Company. The



Muhammad Ali Khan Wallajah.

In 1784, the Arcot Interest pushed the British Parliament to liquidate the Nawabs' debts to the British East India Company and return revenue collection rights to him. The British government was quite unwilling. They also became suspicious as to why the Arcot Interest wanted to help the Nawab with his debt to the British East India Company. The group then declared that they were owed money by the Nawab and produced the most astronomical and unbelievable figures.

loans were given at sky-high interest rates and the only way to pay them back was to grant them revenue collection rights to parcels of land. The deal was too good to be true and everybody wanted to become a creditor. These creditors became very rich and formed a powerful coterie, which would come to be known as the Arcot Interest. At least 13 members of Parliament were part of this group and their combined wealth gave them the power to sway all parliamentary decisions in their favour. Eventually, the war ended.

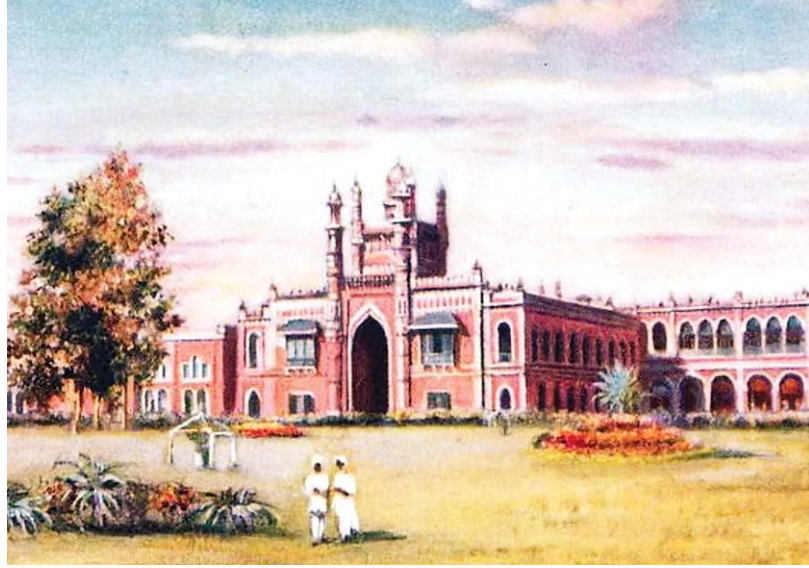
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they were owed money by the Nawab and produced the most astronomical and unbelievable figures. Even today, we do not have an accurate estimate of the true figures, but one scholar estimated it at GBP 4.4 million (at today's rates, it was worth over GBP 1000 million)! They stressed that it was in the British interest to return his lands to the Nawab so that his debts to British citizens could be paid. The Nawab, quite unable to pay back either party, colluded with the Arcot Interest and declared that the wacky figures were correct. At least he would be rid of the bigger evil, he probably thought.

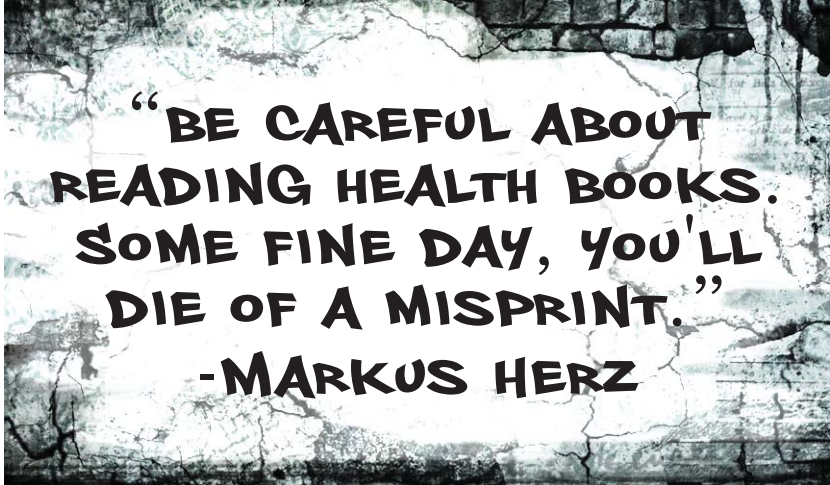
The British didn't budge. It was all part of the takeover plan. The then Nawab of Arcot (Wallajah's grandson) too was forced by the magnitude of the trumped-up debt figures to sign over most of his kingdom to the British in 1801. In return, he would receive an annual pension, enough to live a comfortable life in a stately villa they had set up for him.

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THE WALL

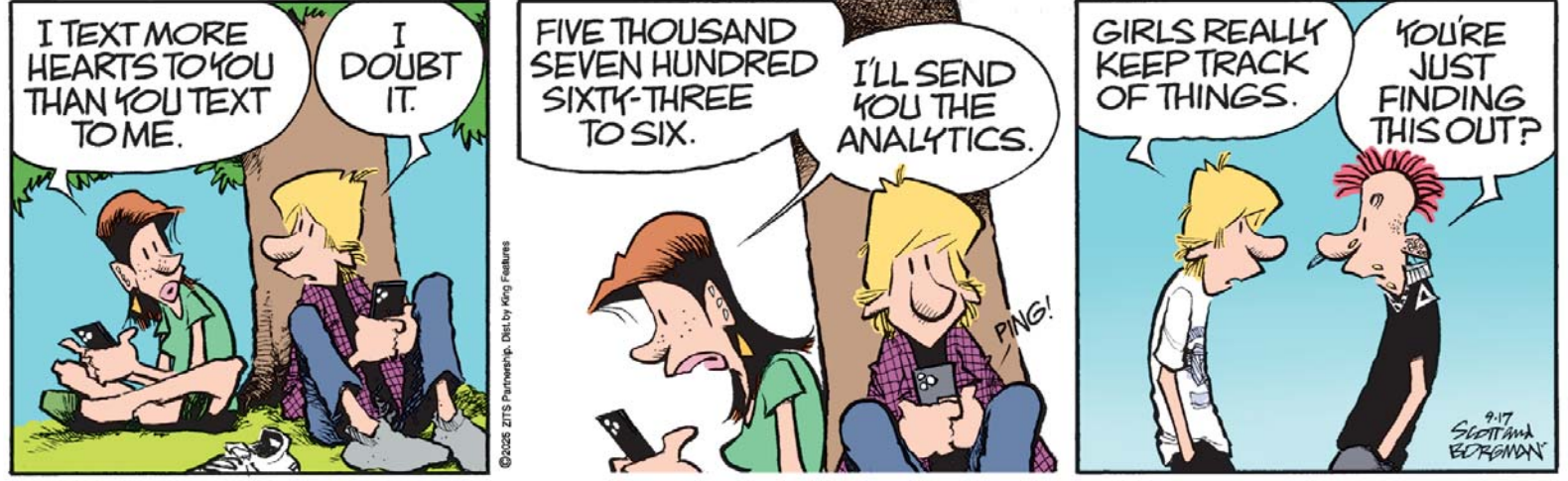


BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

