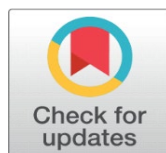


A STUDY OF CULTURAL ADOPTION OF MINIATURE PAINTINGS IN AIR INDIA PUBLICITY POSTERS

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ABSTRACT

To study the cultural factors, appealing elements and themes of Indian miniature painting used in different commercial advertising posters of Air India. This objective will be achieved by qualitative analysis of some posters used in advertising campaigns by Air India company ever since from its establishment, in which artist uses Indian miniature paintings as reference to communicate and influence people both nationally and internationally. By medium of this paper it will be easier to make people aware about the cultural and artistic importance of Indian miniature painting and how it helped Air India to connect with people worldwide.

Keywords: Miniature Paintings, Indian Culture, Poster, Airindia, Publicity

1. INTRODUCTION

The cultural heritage of India lies in its art forms and we take pride in how our art forms and values impacts whole world. Indian art has been acknowledged for its abundance, legacy that indicates cultural depth and global impression. Due to its antiquity, enriched values Indian art and culture has secured a place globally. One such art form is miniature painting. Indian miniature paintings are culturally valuable for historical and artistic reasons. Miniature art in India has more than

1,000 year old history and great artistic formality linked to religion and culture¹. Miniature paintings in India started as early as the 7th-9th centuries and reached their greatest popularity during the Mughal schools. Throughout history, varieties of Indian miniature paintings included Mughal, Rajput, Pahari, and Deccan schools, but their style depended on the cultural contexts at each historical era. Miniature art has a profound cultural and artistic value as it lies behind several key factors which reflects the motives, subject, and style of each era and school production. The cultural and religious factors contributing to miniature art value are themes which were related to the scenes Hindu epics. Hindu painters were also inspired by the Mughal style of paintings and they portrayed stories from 'Ramayana' and 'Mahabharata' in their miniatures. There was a great variety of other themes in Rajasthani miniatures like nature, seasons, royal life, hunting scene, love scene, music, ragmala series and beautiful depiction of women.² The main purpose of doing tourism publicity is to lure people for which Indian miniature paintings is an ideal option as they portray an accurate outlook of Indian culture because of its complex details and bold colors which takes all the attention from people. A poster is used for publicity of any product or service, a piece of paper is designed to be attached to a wall or vertical surface in public space for purpose of promotion. A poster may contain both textual and graphic elements. The origin of Air India airline can be traced back to 1932 which was established by Mr. JRD Tata.³ For promoting its newly developed routes and destinations, air india started publicizing through various means possible such as posters, coasters, time tables, calenders, badges and much more. [Ghosh \(2021\)](#)

Travel poster designed in India's golden era, the 50s and the 60s, under the art direction of J. B. Cowasji at Air India Design Studio in Bombay, a number of artists created poster for the airline.⁴ These posters were full of humor, cultural awareness and comprehensive understanding of Indian art can be found in them. They are simple in design yet had diverse nature. At the time, it was common to use mascots in its marketing strategy. Indeed, this strategy offered better visibility, simplicity, immediacy and memorability.⁵ These posters often reflect rich heritage and culture of India. The artist used miniature paintings to promote this newly established airline in India. [Johnson , & Kapoor \(2023\)](#)

This can be seen in Air India poster designed by artist K.K.Save in 1968, SHIKAR. (Figure1). Now housed at poster house permanent collection.⁶This poster design is inspired from hunting scenes painted by Kota school of painting. It is named city of India state Rajasthan, where this paintings were created. Shikar refers to an organised hunting sport, which was being entertained by rich Rajput rulers of early 18th century. Those rulers or maharajas were idolized for their act of bravery by hunting animals like tigers, lions, boars and elephants and other exotic wild animals. Hunting was prominent sport in Kota and Bundi as it was dense forest region⁷. Those hunting scenes were painted by local artist which were commissioned by maharajas'. Detailed analysis of this poster: [Khaitan, & Matthai \(2022\)](#)

- 1) **Main artwork:** The maharaja is being seated on his horse followed by his attendants having fan with peacock feathers and parasol, a small umbrella in their hands and one of his attendant is fighting a tiger. Faces of all figures in this work are in profile and their bodies are in three quarter view. Foilage appears in background of landscape.
- 2) **Border:** Border is of red color and letters are in yellow box with red colored border.
- 3) **Typography:** Sans serif typeface is used in poster with words air india at bottom and shikar India at top right corner.

The theme of this poster is greatly inspired by a miniature painting of Bundi school, Kumar kishen singh of Bundi Hunting, 1730. (Figure2). It was made in gouache with gold on paper. Now housed at Kapoor gallery, New York.⁸ Detailed analysis of painting:

- 1) **Main artwork:** The maharaja, Kishen singh of Bundi can be seen on his horseback with his attendants in profile view, approaching for tiger hunt. The foilage at bottom of painting.
- 2) **Border:** Border is red in color which is common element in this school.

Resemblance in artistic portray of scene: The maharaja's appearance in the poster and painting are similar which stamps his position in the ideology of classical Indian painting. Also the red border appears same.



This thematic visual similarity can be seen in another poster issued by Air India in 1975, RAGA MALKAUS (Figure3) made by artist Avinash Godbole.

Ragamala paintings illustrative painting series based on the 'garland of ragas' or Ragamala, depicting various modes of Indian music. The theme of these paintings rotates around love where union and separation both are depicted. Art and classical music are merged into these paintings as there is no narration of any storyline is followed here. They were flourished during 16th to 18th centuries, one of the raga Malkaunsa is a human lord and his raginis are thought to be dyed in the colour of love.⁹ [Pradhan \(2021\)](#)

In this poster raga malkaunsa is depicted which is one of the 6 main ragas, Raga Malkaus is a tune which convey affinity in love. It is normally portrayed as a seated couple who hold veenas or listens to music. In this poster the artist used his creative ability by blending two figures in one showcasing maharaja. The bottom left of this poster shows the text or verse of popular raga malkaus, what mood it indicates and also what time it should be played. Along with creative vision, the poster does showcase the true depiction of theme. Instead of promoting new route and destination of airway, this poster tells the story of cultural roots which is very rare. Air India is at par promoting India's cultural heritage and taking it to the global level.



There are more such examples like raga todi of ragmala series (Figure4), Bani thani from kishangarh which were used as inspiring themes by Air India for publicity of Indian culture. [Ani \(2016\)](#)

2. CONTEMPORARY SCENE

Recently, in contemporary times also this league is being continued by company for promotional purposes. Alliance air, a subsidiary of Air India also owned by Mr JRD Tata, released series of posters depicting Indian miniature painting and promoting their new flights.

In poster, FLY TO PANTNAGAR WITH AIR ALLIANCE (Figure 5). released on march 2024. In this poster artist used artwork of pahari miniatures of Kangra, as it is without any change. The style of miniature painting evolved in Kangra, Himachal Pradesh is considered a precious gem of Pahari schools of miniature painting that flourished in the 17th to 18th century in the North Indian states of Himachal Pradesh, Jammu, Uttarakhand, and Punjab. [10 Raha \(2023\)](#)

In this poster the visualizer used the painting VIRHINI NAYIKA [love torn heroine] from late 18th c which is housed at Cleveland museum of art. The painting is placed at left side while a message to anonymous passenger to the right about intricate beautiful painting style and informative text about visiting such place at bottom right corner in red box as highlighting part with company logo at top left corner. Here no creative ability has been seen but the motive was to promote the place with its cultural artistic insight.

Apart from poster designs, Air India Express a subsidiary of Air India found a unique way of promoting Indian culture by their new advertising campaign tale of tails in which Indian art will be showcased on the tail of aircraft which will definitely elevate the culture of India worldwide. One of such aircraft is being operated between India and Abudhabi showcasing a beautiful intricate miniature painting named todi ragini of raga malkaunsa of 1694, housed at National museum New Delhi and another painting solah sringar of kangra school painted in 1800s. (Figure 6).



3. CONCLUSION

The use of miniature painting in poster art created a link between the past and present. By putting spotlight on beautiful intricate details of miniature paintings which demonstrates the preciseness in work of artist, the bright colors appear in these paintings, making painting attractive and finally the themes which tells a specific story of India's culture, historical background and inheritance tales. When use all these characteristics in poster it will not only make it captivating but also educate people about this country's rich cultural history. Air India airline company had always played crucial role by making countless efforts to elevate and spread the beauty of Indian culture by adopting these exquisite miniature paintings for their promotional posters. Many of these posters are being displayed at international museums which reinforce more visitors who are fascinated by these beautiful art form of India making it popular globally. This amalgamation of poster and painting has been proven a strong appeal towards making Indian culture proud. Every tourism promotional entity should make these efforts to make Indian art form admired worldwide.

Some recommendations for the Poster designing:

- 1) **Theme of painting:** The main focus here is the centre of the painting which tells a story from ancient history for example it features god and goddesses to show mythology, Mughal courts to show the royalty and various traditions like procession in wedding of rajputs were showcased in the form of a miniature painting.
- 2) **Border:** Borders have always been a part of Indian artwork. Various miniature pattern together forms a border which in itself portrayed a story and also it framed the central art and enhanced the beauty of centre art piece.
- 3) **Typography:** Inculcating ancient scripts like Devanagari with English will give the art work a Morden feel with ancient touch and the fusion will altogether give an authentic experience to viewer and traditional component will enhance the elegance of artwork.
- 4) **Color:** By using the colour schemes that are used in miniature painting will be a pleasing combination and will leave a good visual impression.
- 5) **Communicative Text:** By mentioning some text descriptions and places such as museums and art galleries where one can actually find these miniature painting and view them which will enhance the interest and knowledge of viewer even more.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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