

THE PROMOTION OF SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH CALENDAR ART

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Abstract

The calendar art is always remain popular in the field of art and advertising. The calendar art of India is important and significant from the pre-colonial times. The art of calendar and its icons ussly depicts the personification of Gods and Goddesses but after sometime the art was more commercialized and advertising brands and companies started to channelize their promotion with the help of these calendar art icons. The art of calendar is also being used for the promotion and channelization of ecological practices and the art and culture is also being promoted through the same. The approach which was initiated to circulate the imagery of Gods and Goddesses has been evolved further with the help of advertisement. From the remote past, we have a variety of calendars for commercial purposes and for the promotion of a particular brands, these calendars are also full with the advancement of nature, flora and fauna and sometimes the art and culture of a particular place, group community are the main theme of such calendars. The study will explore the role of sustainability in context to such themes and representation. The approach of traditional calendars will be evaluated through the comparison and assessment with the contemporary calendars.

1. Introduction

The term "Calendar art refers primarily to mass-produced colour prints who lent themselves to the expression of national sentiment, envisioning the nation through its landscapes, its bounded territory, its gods and goddesses and sacred sites, its myths, and legends, highlighting the lofty ideals of spiritual, saga of valour and pictorial ballads of valiant warriors and heroes". It was also stated further that the enigma and beauty of calendar art related with reality which is produced through popular beliefs, symbolic application, and fantasy. The religious story, popular myths, mythological instances, folk sagas have been intermingled in a visual form which make the art more fascinating (Smith, 1995).

It was also stated that the origin and history of the art is related with the emergence of printing industry. The industry was established around 19th century where the images of Gods and Goddesses were printed and circulated to people. It was also mentioned that the art was highly motivated with the religious and mythological themes (Mcleod, 1991). There was also a major approach in terms of advertising as the services and goods have been started to be advertised through the art where the national and political ideologies have also been served well with the same. (Neumayer, 2003).

Ravi Varma, the painter of colonial India was also the harbinger of the mass-circulation of this art as the production was done in Ravi Varma Fine Arts Lithographic Press in 1894. His numerous paintings have been filled with Indian religious theme and mythological execution in Western or European settings. He executed his paintings for elite class and printed the same art for the ordinary people. (Thakurta, 1991). He was also the pioneer of executing Indian theme in modern style and application. He was particularly known for his mythological theme and portraits, but his name is also famous for printing oleographs of his paintings. He made the art easy and convenient to the marginalized and common people of India, and that was the major change.

The calendar art was becoming popular and commercialized and after that various printing press was established and explored. His paintings were the mirror of that society. His oleographs entered all the doors of common people in the form of calendar art. The people worshipped the icons of Varma and considered it a

fortune and privilege. According to an art collector Ganesh V Shivaswamy, “the Ravi Varma Fine Art Lithographic Press in Bombay lunched in 1894 with its first oleograph ‘The Birth of Sakoonatala’” (Govind, 2019).

The lithographic press was established in Bombay in 1894 and Govardhandas Khataumakhanji advised him to make the prints of his paintings so that the high demand can be satisfied with less efforts. The prints were affordable to the common people and that is why the art was circulated door to door to celebrate the art of the divine. Some of the major name in the category are Calcutta Art Studio, bow bazaar street, Calcutta; Chitrashala Steam Press, Poona near Bombay (1878); Hem Chand Bhargava, Chandni chowk, Delhi (1900); S.S.Brijbasi (1927-28); Sivakasi National Litho Press, Tamilnadu (1954); Chor Bagan Art Studio, Calcutta; Lakshminibilas Press, Cawnpore; Kununyalal Lachoomal, Delhi; Anant Shivaji Desai, Bombay; Anandeshwar Press; Arya-Bhushan Press; P.S.Joshi Kalbadevi, Bombay; Rising Art Cottage, Calcutta; Battala Press, Calcutta; Harnarayan & Sons etc. They mostly followed the techniques of lithography, chromolithography, letter-press printing, woodcut printing, albumen printing, bromide printing and half-tone printing. The major cities were Calcutta, Bombay, Chennai, Patna, Lucknow, Kanpur, Amritsar, and Delhi, which produced the art of calendar on a mass level.

2. Sustainability through Calendar Art

Calendar art of India is full of religious incarnations, and natural elements play a significant role to narrate the story. When we look back at the art of calendar, it was almost impossible to see the art or projection. The manifestation of deities was decorated and beautified with the glory of nature. The religious texts and narratives cannot be imagined without the amalgamation of nature, the Gods and Goddesses were decorated with the spirit of nature as like they were narrated in the mythological text. There are various examples of narratives where a Goddess is described as sitting in the lap of nature. A God is surrounded with a beautiful landscape of nature. This divine scenic beauty was exactly captured by the artists as described by the narratives. This very approach of nature has been described through the art of calendar. This very projection of nature gives a feeling of connectivity towards flora and fauna. Spectators also feel connected and inspired with the divine aura of nature in its utmost divine bliss. If we talk about the modern approach of calendar, the trends are still in the practice but the different subjects have been brought together. Its instances can be seen in multipurpose calendar like office desk calendar, promotional calendar, etc.

In most of the calendars of Ravi Varma we can see a combination of environment, flora and fauna. In numerous images, the relation of nature with mythological beings have been harmonized through the deception of natural sights. In one of the images (fig.1), the incarnation of Goddess Laxmi can be seen with an association of elephant which is considered auspicious as per Hindu mythology. Additionally, the divine imagination of human beings can be seen through the promotion of natural surroundings which is indicating that all the supernatural powers can only reside or stay at such environment. The environment full of flowers and vegetation, clean water with soothing weather. This divine attributes has been thoroughly accepted and celebrated through such calendars.



Fig.1 Lakshmi Vinolia soap calendar, Raja Ravi Varma, 1930

3. Source:

<https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/lakshmi-vinolia-soap-calendar-attributed-to-the-ravi-varma-press/SgFb3Hgn3mQiNw>

The image is showcasing the pleasant sun and the purpose is to promote the bathing soap which is a day process. The water is also giving the same freshness which can be get after the bathe. The process of bathing is also considered sacred in Hindu mythology, so the divine imagery of Goddess Laxmi is also indicating the same. To give the soap a natural touch of feeling, this natural setting is helpful to ensure the users that they will get this divine bliss after taking bath with this soap. Thus, the nature is used to promote the idea of soap but indirectly sustainability is being promoted too. The elephant is also considered a symbol of prosperity and also associated with Lord Ganesha, a Hindu deity and son of Lord Shiva.

In contemporary times, the art of Calendars has been evolved through the projection of architectural buildings, monuments, forests, flora and fauna, natural landscapes etc. Even some of the calenderers are being decorated with the art, craft and heritage. Apart from mythological and religious significance, natural scenes and environments like different moods of whether have been depicted from the remote past.

The modern day practices are very direct and indicative as compare to the earlier one. The projection of ecology can also be seen in majority. The art of calendar is changing its form and appearance with the mark of time and making itself convenient as per the demand of human needs and desire.



Fig.2 Calendar of Contemporary Age

<http://www.globalstewards.org/environmental-calendar.htm>

In modern days, there are so many initiatives which are taken for the protection of environment and people are also concerned about global warming. The projection of calendar took a different mark for the continuation of this trend. At various events and initiatives, calendar are distributed which have such themes related with sustainability. The idea of sustainability is very-well-groomed through the help of such trendy calendars. These calendars are handy and comfortable to carry or to give as a token or gift and through these tokens, the green and eco-friendly attributes are also being promoted. Even in office work table people are more likely to use or keep such artistic approach to make it more impressing, unique and environment friendly.

The calendar art which was started through the application of God has now shifting its place into the current advertising industry. Even the fashion and cinema also using the very art through new perspectives. The calendar has been changed into various forms and application for instance the office desk calendar, the government and private institutions, university, and school's calendars and so on and on. It is mentioned that "It was quite different back in December 1885 when ToI noted "how the practice of sending out trade calendars of various attractive designs has increased in recent years." Marketing had combined with availability of good quality colour printing to make them popular gifts. The big European retailers like Treacher & Co were sending out calendars with standard images of flowers and cute children. Devdutt Pattanaik, the mythology expert, who has written 7 Secrets from Hindu Calendar Art, explains that calendar art was the first time many people saw images of the deities: "If you lived in a remote village, you knew your local deity, and perhaps had access to folk art, but you wouldn't have seen the images in big temples." Some castes would also not have been able to enter the temples, and even those who could often would not have been able to see the flower bedecked idols" (Dr. Vikram 2018).

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