



Typography, Sensitivity and Fineness'

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Sensitivity and Fineness in Typography on Cycle-Rickshaws in Cultural Capital of India - Varanasi

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Abstract:

The world knows that Varanasi is the spiritual city of religion, knowledge and culture. Concurrently Varanasi is also growing as a hub of creativity and invention, which speculates on the materials and elements around us - like clothing, supplements, commodities, transportation and so on. We are concentrating on designs made on Rickshaws (*Cycle Rickshaws*), which reflects the classical heritage of typography designing in Varanasi. These Rickshaws are the primary attraction for Foreign and Local tourists in Varanasi, because it is clear and comfortable transport medium for traveling. We can focus along the cognitive performance of making typographical designs on Rickshaws, their planning, colour treatment, fashion, looks and existence as well as the importance and implication of these objectives. This designing style is originated in Varanasi and flourishing in nearby townships, metropolises, and small towns. How these designs are informative, yet raise the presence of Rickshaws and to attract viewers and customer focus. We can all so place information how Indian heritage is reflected in the typography and pictograms imprinted on Rickshaws. Typographical designs, subjects are owner's information, publicity and information's for tourists. Pictograms are mythological, nature and geometrical shapes. These designs are

made by local artisans; we can also talk about their works, culture, life and designing careers. How we can implement and transform this designing style in contemporary methods of typography and indigenous Font design.

Keywords: Design, Typography, Varanasi, Transportation, Cycle-Rickshaw, Artisan, Graphic Design, Culture, Heritage.

CYCLE-RICKSHAW¹

*It may sound like socialism to say
we should treat horses like human beings,
especially when one of them happens to be a human being.
When we jump guiltily off a rickshaw,
and then feel sorry we've deprived the poor man of his livelihood
and finally tip him out of pity-
in all three cases we're a trial to him, and he has to endure us.
It is only when we haggle over the fare
that we approach equality.
Come, you engineers of the twenty-first century,
let's invent a cycle-rickshaw in which
the passenger and horse can sit side by side
and just go for a spin.
And what good will this do, you may ask?
Well, if there's a disagreement between you and the horse,
at least he won't have to turn round and get a crick in his neck.
- by Raghuvir Sahay*

An Introduction:

Varanasi is one of the Classical and Urbanized cultural capital which represent INDIA at World stage. According to Mark Twain In 1897, Mark Twain, the renowned Indophile, said of Varanasi, "Benares is older than history, older than tradition, older even than legend, and looks twice as old as all of them put together"². Varanasi from its establishment is the cultural capital of

1 - Raghuvir Sahay , *Indian Literature* , Vol. 36, No. 1 (153), ACCENT ON HINDI POETRY (Jan.-Feb, 1993), p. 17 , Sahitya Akademi

2 - Twain, Mark (1897). "L". *Following the Equator: A journey around the world*. Hartford, Connecticut, American Pub. Co. ISBN 0-404-01577-8. OCLC 577051.

India; all bordering counties are centered to Varanasi. The flow of its grandeur was extended from local to universal extremes. Music, Educational, Heritage, Transportation, Culture, Civilization, Superstition-Faith and Theist-Heathen etc. are followed by their tradition from past, Art of Writing shows potential and power as medium which is the carrier of History and culture. Varanasi is the city which imposes a typographical image of 'Har Har Maha Dev' to 'Jai Shree Ram' in the wits of Indian Public. Even today Varanasi is haulage its ancient tradition and culture gracefully.

To explore and understand Varanasi tourist prefer an open and spacious transport, too accomplish their necessity; **Three Wheeler Cycle-Rickshaw** is the best ally. An invention of Cycle Rickshaws was supposedly begun in 19th century which had been adapted and modified by different civilization around the world as per their requirements. India also one of them who become accustomed to these three wheeler's as adventurous convey and personalized it in a range of forms, designs by several techniques. Varanasi is one of the empowered and prominent places in eastern part of Utter Pradesh, India. More than 25 Lakhs peoples of Varanasi and thousands of tourists from other part of India and World use various forms of transports to travel in Varanasi; among them Cycle-Rickshaw is one of the virtual medium for transportation in Varanasi.³ The rickshaw industry in India is highly unorganized. Though no exact market size of the industry is available, a conservative estimate puts the number of cycle rickshaws in India at 10 million, including both the passenger rickshaws and the peddle carts used to carry goods. The increase in the number of malls and Metro has increased the mobility of people giving a boost to the sector. ⁴

When a tourist or inhabitant travels on Cycle-Rickshaw, they have the sense of freedom and level of comfort; to feel the essence of Varanasi and the joy of being Banarasi. The natural essence of joy they get when they travel by Cycle-Rickshaw; they get chance to admire the visual appeal and creative designs of closest rickshaws near them. Typographical designs and graphic images made on Cycle-Rickshaw attract them to have a high regard for Artisan and their Art. As a result of viewing Typographical designs, Pictograms, Geometrical shapes,

3 -DAVID ARNOLD, The Problem of Traffic: The street-life of modernity in late-colonial India (pp. 119-141)

4 - Apna Rickshaw - SMV Wheels Pvt. Ltd., Varanasi, UP, <http://smvwheels.blogspot.in/>

Borders, Symbols, Mythological subjective designs and imitation of nature make viewers to travel in the thought process, that how these designs were made and implemented on these Cycle-Rickshaws; furthermore how their presence depict the heritage of Varanasi.

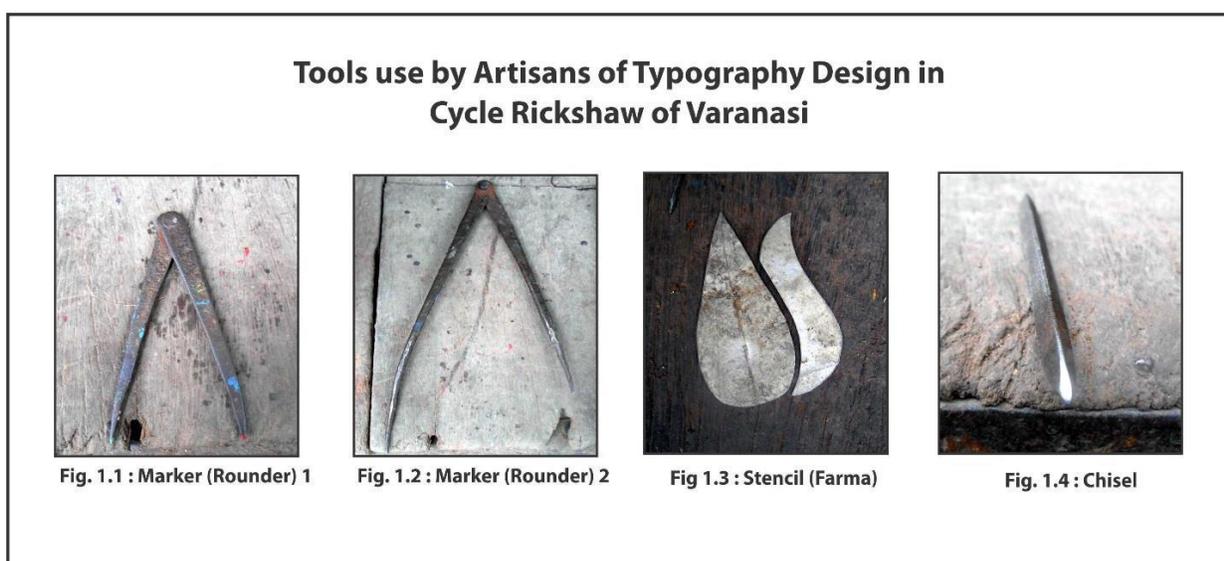
Sensitivity and Fineness: Metal Embossing Art of Typography on Cycle-Rickshaw

This metal embossing traditional and rare skill based art form of writing has been inspired completely from religious tradition and lifestyle of Varanasi. This skill based art form also consist pictorial designs. This art form is being delivered by ten shops situated in four major areas of Varanasi - Beniabag, Khojva, Lahurabir and Badigaibi. These four areas are situated in the range of 5 Kilometer in center of Varanasi. This is an art form which has passed on from father to son and master to student. This art form is patrimonial. Present artisans are second generation carrying forward this art form. These artisans belong to various cast and religions.

Artisan Tools:

- Metal Marker
- Parkar- rounder
- Chheni - chisel (two types big and small)
- Hathaudi- hammer
- Gunia - L shape ruller
- Farma - stencil
- Cutter

Above mentioned tools are used to make these designs.



Planning:

Client: Client provides basic information and details which he wants to be designed on his rickshaw. The general requirements of these designs are pictogram, symbols and subjective designs. Sometimes they also demand for special image, language use for typography and designs like Taj Mahal, Howrah Bridge etc. to decorate their rickshaw.

Artisan: They have two choices of making line drawing while planning to design their rickshaw. One is line-drawing directly made by hand and second is by using stencils of different shapes on metal sheet. Artisans follow the instructions given by their client and create these designs according to their demand. They have specific clients and they know what they want, for example - owner name in different languages, religious/natural/geometrical diagrams etc. They have some set patterns which they use in absence of instructions by the client. These patterns they put some stencils that they call 'Farma'. With these stencil they can make their designs easily and in less time. They also make designs freehand. They also have their designed logo on these rickshaws by which they recognize that the Rickshaw is made by them. They plan their design so that the time consumption and cost would go simultaneously.

Process:

Process of Making Decorative Design: First they cut the metal (tin, aluminum) sheet according to required shape. After that they draw designing shapes and diagrams with the help of metal marker, rounder, stencils etc. Once the drawing is made on metal sheets they select same type of designs and combine them together into a bunch. Then they start to strike by hammer and chisel so that design came over as an emboss pattern on the opposite side on the whole sheet in the bunch. While striking they maintain their stroke with same force and same distance between one and other stroke (synchronization in making strokes). They choose the designs which they have to go first according to their choice. But the geometrical shapes and other set patterns they like to go first. Then they go to other diagrams and Typography step by step.

Normally the sheet designed by the name of owner and other diagrams of religious interpretations like Shiva, Shivling, Trishul, Ganesha etc., an implementation of nature like - flower, petals, leaf etc., geometrical representations like - Circle, triangle, square etc., as well as few special demands of famous Indian monuments, Bollywood stars so on by customers

which has mounted on the back of Rickshaw so that it could be noticeable to viewer behind the Rickshaw. Artisan put their Monogram on panel mounted under the passenger's seat. They always keep in mind that designs made on Cycle-Rickshaw must be communicative. The name of owner and his family member like - husband wife, children elders name also are carved. Few quotations, phrases used by public of Varanasi are written on these Rickshaws. Worship places from various customs are imprinted on them as an example Shiv, Ram, Ganesh, 786 etc. Because these artisans have their own imagination level and most probably of their social level that's why to look these letters and other forms interesting they include inspiration based on local catalyst. If the owner of Rickshaw belongs to Muslim society, the symbol of 786 and moon-star are shown. If the owner belongs to Hindu society the symbol like 'Trishul', 'Dhanush', 'Shivlinga' etc. along with typography are composed in the design. This whole process is done on inner part of metal sheet and special part is that it is done on 3 to 4 sheet together. Fine chisel are used in typography art on sheets and for border of typography or other pictorial art they use little thick chisel.

These designs vary according to their proportion and ratio.

Typography with supporting Design patterns in Cycle Rickshaw of Varanasi



Fig. 2.1 : Typography for Hindu Religion



Fig. 2.2 : Typography for Muslim Religion



Fig. 2.3 : Typography for Rickshaw Company



Fig. 2.4 : Typography for Artisan Logo

Process of Making Typographical Design: Imprinting Typographic designs on Metal Sheets is a reverse designing process in which alphabets (Hindi, English and Urdu) are arranged and set in Up-side down position (just like Old Letter press printing process) as an Example: when an artist designing a type in a semicircle shape, to make a semicircular design they do not use any measurement or specific methods; it is entirely based on their experience and skill which comes from their hard earning of Past. These type designs are visually proportionate as measured and skilled designed forms. After making free hand line-drawing of these Types artist start shaping up with the help of hammer and chisel.

While shaping Alphabets and Numbers according to their subject are easily made without any measurement with the help of their regular tools. Writing types in such a talented and skilled manner by these artisans is commendable. A clinking made from the touch of chisel to metal sheet display the skills of artists hand and mind. The musical rhythm coming out of this process reflects in the rhythmic hand movement of an Artist. Structures of types used in this art form are not monitored by any guideline of typography, calligraphy, font, typeface, serif, san-serif and other rules. These artisans design typography accurately merely on the basis of their exercise and skill. However typographical glimpse of inspiration coming from sources around them like film posters, advertising posters, newspaper advertising, film magazines, environment and society etc.

This is a skill based occupation and artisan family through their own style to maintain their working style, that's why there are some minor to major diversity can be seen when area and artisan changed. On Client's demands artisan's do all types of changes and lure in designs they make for Cycle-Rickshaw. Changes are may be in 'Matras' of Devnagari or some alphabets in a range of Language, for example to change 'ee' Mattra of 'si' in Varanasi is shaped in simply temple dome form and an arrow shape at the end of horizontal header of the words shown in figure 3.1 & 3.2. Generally alphabets and numbers are written in Hindi language at some point they are implemented in English and Urdu also.

In this whole process the most appreciative and criticizing factor appear together in the design. The criticism is that if same alphabet and mattra comes frequently, in similar design the same alphabet/letter would have some difference in its shape and style of writing. For example in figure 2.2 and 2.3 'ee' and 'a' comes twice in a word, both mattra's and alphabate would be slightly different to each of its kind.

Typography on metalplate with supporting instruments in rhythmic way for Cycle Rickshaw of Varanasi



Fig.3.1 Artisans Arun Kumar working on typography at Beniabagh, Varanasi



Fig.3.1 Form of typeface by Artisan Arun Kumar at Beniabagh, Varanasi

Colour: After this whole work on the right side of the sheet they fill and ornamented by enamel paint. The core colors use for adornment are red, blue, green, yellow and black.

Designing Cost: On the whole the cost of per Cycle-Rickshaw in Varanasi is around 12000 to 13000 rupees. And the cost of designer division is around 2500 to 3300 Rupees per Cycle-Rickshaw. We talked to Arun Kumar he told us that normally one artist can design 2 to 3 rickshaws in a day and earn profit of 150 to 300 rupees on each Cycle-Rickshaw.

To understand this whole process we three authors saw the working technique. We understood their social status and art skill deeply. The artisans who we talked to are Arun Kumar (41year), Murari Mistri (62 year), Pradip Kumar (47 year). In Arun Kumar's words who is an artisan in addition to owner of shop situated in Beniabag, Varanasi. He has been doing this job for 17 years because his father was doing this. Approximately all the artisans are in business because somebody from their family was doing this; only few outsiders apart from family associate d with the trade. Arun's shop monogram is designed on the name of his father 'Naresh Prasad'. According to Arun there has been no major dissimilarity in this special writing style since last 17 years. He told us that the rickshaws designed from his shop are sent to Jaunpur, Azamgarh, Balia in Uttar Pradesh and Bhabhua, Sasaram in Bihar. While asking about future he told us that it is in last stage and he doesn't see his family growth potential in the business.^{5 & 6}

Conclusion:

Views and Future perspective: Skill based art forms like 'Metal Embossing Art of Typography' used for decorative designing for Cycle-Rickshaw and other analogous arts need to carry further and sustain for opportunity. How to be practical and commercial to these art form and this entrepreneur Art form needs more attention in Future.

Suggestion: This art form need to be conserved and flourish for coming generation. Such a skilled, traditional and unique art form needs to be preserved for the sake of the existence and sustainability. This unique art of writing need authorities and cultural protection and preservation from nation what it deserves. As per our knowledge

5 - Subhojit Banerjee, Project 'RAMBO': An Initiative to Improve Rickshaw Pullers' Earnings *Development in Practice*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Feb., 2010), pp. 57-69, Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd. on behalf of Oxfam GB

6 - Dr. Neeta Kumar, *Artisans of Varanasi - The Popular Culture and Identity 1880-1986*, Princeton University Press (November 21, 1988), page no 26-27

concern we are the first who raise the issue through our research to promote this art form as an prospective source of some different typographical designs typography style as well. It is a step from our side to grab an attention and concern for the preservation of **Metal Embossing Art of Typography on Cycle-Rickshaw and artisans.**

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- 9 : Interview (December 2014) from Arun Kumar (41 year), Murari Mistri (62 year), Pradip Kumar (47 year) shop owners of Cycle Rickshaw Design at Beniabagh, Varansi, UP, INDIA in
- 10 : <http://www.dsource.in/gallery/gallery-0545/index.html>