Printing and Printmaking Practices in 19th Century Punjab

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Abstract: In this research paper, the arrival of printing in Punjab region, its development in the 19th century and its growth as printmaking is discussed. The printing came to Punjab with the British rule. Compared to the other parts of the country, the printing arrived late in this region, in the year 1809 in Ludhiana by the British Missionaries. Soon it spread and printing presses were set up in Lahore. European amateur and professional artists came between the years 1820 to 1838, many European visitors came to Lahore, of which some were skilled artists. The royal family and noblemen came in contact with their works for the first time and were impressed by this 'new' style. Some of them sketched in Punjab and after returning to England got their sketches copied, transferred into prints and published the folios or books. Artists who worked in the bazaar style, mainly at Lahore and Amritsar and catered to the tastes of newly developed middle class, literate public and worked in painting and printmaking medium. Their amalgamated style owes much to the print making practices as it truly fulfills the function and purpose of making prints-multiples made for masses, affordable art which could reach the ordinary household in form of books, magazines, posters or individual prints, which paved way for the present day prints.

Key Words: Printing, Printmaking, Printing presses, Amateur Artists, Lahore, Amritsar, Display Prints.

Materials and Methods:
Methods- Visiting libraries and archives, printing presses.

Introduction:
The stable Sikh rule under Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his successors, particularly that of Sher Singh, saw the amalgamation of various styles in art such as Pahari, Rajput, Mughal, European and was expressed in various forms such as murals, miniatures, manuscript illustrations, decorations etc. these were created by the artists from different backgrounds and communities, as the cultural atmosphere in Punjab had brought master craftsmen from all directions. The artistic activities mainly progressed in Lahore and Amritsar and also in other states such as Kapurthala, Patiala, Nabha, and Jind.

European amateur and professional artists:
between the years 1820 to 1838, many European visitors came to Lahore, of which some were skilled artists. The royal family and noblemen came in contact with their works for the first time and were impressed by this 'new' style. Some of the artists who came and worked in Punjab during these years were Baron Hughel, Emily Eden, G.T. Vigne, Von Arlinch, C.S. Hardinge, Coline Mackenzie, William carpenter, August Schoefft came later in 1841 and worked at Lahore and Amritsar.2

Lord Auckland's Nephew, Mr. Osborne had come to Punjab in 1836. He was trained in drawing. His aunt, Emily Eden was an amateur artist, who came six months later and accompanied her brother, Lord Auckland during his visits to court and other places in Punjab. She used to make sketches, mainly of people. She did several sketches of royal family including Sher Singh, Hira Singh, Pratap Singh. In 1838, she sketched Maharaja Ranjit Singh in profile.3

After returning to England, Emily Eden published her miniature size drawings in a book titled "Portraits of the princes and people in India.”

1 Aggarwal, J.C. and Aggarwal, S.P. Modern History of Punjab- Relevant select
3 Eden, Emily, Up the country.
In 1845, copies of this book reached Lahore which showed lithographs in color, made after her original sketches.

Other artists such as Vigne also published lithographs done after drawings done in Punjab. Vigne had done sketches in Punjab in 1835, during the first Anglo-Sikh war (1845). These were mainly published in 'London News' which covered the annexation of Punjab by Sir Charles Napier. This magazine during the 2nd war, published the sketches made on the spot in Multan by Dr. John Dunlop which were later published in a book titled "Multan, a series of sketches during and after the siege."4

A set of lithographs was also published by C.S. Hardinge which was included in his book "Recollections of India", in 1847 in London. Prince A Soltykoff also published some lithographs after drawings of Sikh chieftains. Innumerable lithographs were created after sketches, drawings, studies and paintings done in Punjab and printed and published in London by transferring these into lithographs.

Some of these prints may have reached Punjab but they did not make an impact on print making, pictorially or thematically in direct sense. These fine lithographs are important for knowing the historical places, monuments, events and provide glimpses on the royal life of Punjab in that period. But they did not contribute in the development of printmaking as a medium or technique. Pictorially, these prints did contribute to the court or company paintings of the late 19th century and the popular or bazaar arts, also, to some extent.

After taking the governance in their hands, the British created albums of art works, collected important document and artifacts including books, manuscripts, paintings, ornaments and other valuable things and sent these to London.6 Industrial arts and crafts were surveyed, documented and exhibited. A survey of manufactures of Punjab was carried over by B.H. Baden Powell. His report of the exhibition of these manufactures in 1864 is considered to be responsible for the establishment of the first art school in Punjab which was started in 1875 at Lahore and named after Lord Mayo as "Mayo School of Industrial Arts."

Prints and drawing by European visitors had already arrived in Punjab. After annexation British officers commissioned pictures occasionally. British had their own views about the art education and how it should be imported. The academic training based on the curriculum of Royal College of Art, London, was started at Mayo School under Principal ship of John Lockwood Kipling. Here formal and technical training in western style began with the emphasis or drawing and perspective.7 The artists who preferred to stay in Lahore itself either continued working in their styles or changed their style according to new demands of the British. The officers like Skinner, Fraser encouraged painting in company style for the first time in the Punjab.8

The art activities now continued in a different manner. The artists and artisans worked for the officers in the administration, some joined the public works departments and offices, some joined as teachers and instructors, and some joined in printing and publishing houses as artists and designers.9 The factors like availability of western models such as miniatures, portraits, prints, the new mediums like oil paints and water color, the arrival of photography in Punjab in 1860, became responsible for the change seen in the local or indigenous painting style in Punjab plains.10

History of Printing in Punjab:

Though printing had arrived in India in 1556, it reached Punjab in early 19th century. Ludhiana was the first place where the printing started in 1809.11

As in the other parts of India, Christian missionaries were first to set up a press in Punjab as they thought of printing and publishing as a tool

5Aijazuddin, F.S., Lahore-The views of 19th century.
7Kaur, Jatinderpal, A Study of the Development of Art Education in Punjab, Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Art History and visual Arts, Panjab University, Chandigarh, 2010.
for propaganda of their mission.12 The American Presbyterian Mission Press was established in 1836 at Ludhaina, with Roman and Indo-Persian fonts. This press printed and published Christian scriptures in English, Urdu, Persian, and Indo-roman and later in Gurumukhi and Devnagari fonts. In 1838, seventy thousand volumes of twenty-four different titles were published by this press.13 Punjabi Press, Ludhiana printed which is considered to be the first printed book in Punjabi language. This press also printed a Bible and an English-Punjabi dictionary till the year 1851.14

Apart from Lahore and Amritsar, presses were started in Multan, Sialkot, Jhelum, Rawalpindi, Jalandhar which printed and publishing newspapers, periodical and books. In 1880s and 1890s, many educated Punjabis took to journalism as a profession. Various newspapers were started which expressed their views on social, political issues.15 During this period, social and religious movement and organizations had emerged. This also affected the news papers who became their voice. British officers thought these as harmless. Within 1880 to 1900, many news papers were published in various languages such as Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, and English-such as the Tribune, The observer, Akbar i-am, etc. The largest publications were in Urdu, around 80%, followed by English, Punjabi and Hindi.16 Most of the newspapers and periodicals were published from Lahore and Delhi as the large number of educated public lived there. These newspapers/periodicals included very few illustrations. Most of these were printed in lithography along with the text or separately.17

The facility of reproducing the original drawing or painting truly served the purpose of propaganda and communication and easy excess of images which were rare before. Due to this, art or the pictorial images became available for the common people at cheap rates. These art forms still persist in form of posters, cards, calendars. The origin of 'Sikh Calendar' lies in these popular prints of 19th century, which became a distinct genre in the art of Punjab.

The small and big printing enterprises coming up in the lanes of Lahore and Amritsar indicate at the popularity of these prints. The businessmen from these two cities used the printing technology to promote and spread their products. These pictures were sold in the fairs and festivals, roadsides and at shrines apart from the markets of Lahore and Amritsar.

Though in the beginning, printing was initiated by British and printing presses were set up, there is no evidence that any of the European artists, amateur or professional, had setup any printing press in Punjab as D'Oyly had done in Patna.18 The British officials used to employ local artists, or sometimes expert printers were called from Delhi. As seen from the books available from this period, printing technology had already developed in Delhi. A number of lithographs in Urdu books, some of them showing cityscapes of Delhi or historical places and their surrounding, show mastery over the medium and fine quality in rendering as well as in printing.19

The Punjabi artisans seem to have learnt the techniques by observing, helping and working in Government printing enterprises where local craftsmen were employed to do drawing, engraving and printing of maps and plans. The drawing & printing seem to have been learnt and passed on among the locals.20 It is also likely that the Naqqashas (decorators), Chiteras (painters), Musawars (artists) who were in this profession since generations, must have changed their medium and started with print making as it was by then, a

17 Mir, Farina, "The Social Space of Language: Vernacular Culture in British Colonial Punjab",
19 Some Delhi Cityscapes from Urdu Books.
popular medium. Some of them must have setup the presses, too.

If the popular printed pictures from Punjab in the 19th century are observed, these appear as naive and a bit crude, most of them look as works created by untrained artists. In many a ways, these forms print a ‘bazaar school’ similar to ‘Bat-tala’ school of Calcutta which had flourished in 19th century Bengal. Punjab prints can be considered as first major activity in the print making medium.

Amritsar and Lahore Bazaar Prints: Because of the anonymity of the examples found in the 19th century, most of the printed pictures remain unidentified. Technically and stylistically the prints look alike which makes it difficult to tell about the artists who made it or name of press or place where it was printed. Though printing of books or periodicals was carried over in many cities of the Punjab, when it comes to the printing of individual pictures or display sheets, most of these come either from Lahore or Amritsar. Geographically being

Calendar Art: Sikh calendars by this time had become a distinct genre in itself and these became very popular in the later period. This stylized art form was based on the prints or printed pictures sold in the bazaars of Lahore and Amritsar. Many famous artists like Kehar Singh, Kishan Singh, Bishan Singh, and Jeevan Lal drew for these calendars and the drawings by them were printed. 24 Styles differed from simple, naive to decorative, stylized and realistic renderings.

I visited Amritsar and Jalandhar to find about the presses which used to print this kind of works in the 19th century and interviewed the persons running different presses. But unfortunately, the oldest existing press, ‘Punjabi Press’ in Amritsar dated back to 1902. Other existing presses also belong to the 20th century.

Apart and distinct from the prints by the European visitors and bazaar artists, Printmaking was also practiced in the Mayo School of Art, Lahore. Printmaking at Mayo School: In the Mayo School, the syllabus was planned to train drawing masters, designers, draftsmen, wood engravers, lithographers mainly as technicians. There was a growing demand of skilled artists and draftsmen in various Government and Public enterprises. This policy of art education was promoted in British India, where whole emphasis was on vocational training. Under the mentorship of J. Lockwood Kipling from 1874 to 1894, the purpose of training local talent with industrial arts of various types was fulfilled. Along with other arts, lithography and wood engraving was taught to students as techniques to transfer the drawings and create multiples. These techniques were regularly used and the official materials such as maps, plans were drawn in the school and then printed at the ‘Civil and Military Gazette press, Lahore.

25 Kipling in one of his annual reports of the school for the session 1879-80, wrote: “In the way of lithography, maps and plans have been prepared for the civil and military Gazette press. The wood engraving class has attained some proficiency under Mr. Garrick.”

This makes it clear that these graphic techniques were taught as part of training imparted to the students, were practiced regularly and used for printing of official material. As an independent subject, lithography started in the Mayo School only in the early years of the 20th century with proper workshop and machinery such as printing press and the other material/equipments required for printing. A temporary structure was designed by Kipling for the Punjab Arts Exhibition in 1881, in the year 1891; it was made permanent and in 1902 was enlarged again to contain four large machine workshops and a photo-lithography studio. Till the end of the 19th century, actual printing was not done at the school.

The drawing on different topics, study-work in phenol and water colors, modeling with light and shade was encouraged in the Mayo school which can be seen in the drawings by students of

22Woodcuts of 19th Century Calcutta.
23Appasamy, Jaya, Popular Punjab Lithographs, Visvabharati Quarterly, 43 i-ii- Santiniketan, 1997
24Sengupta, Paula, Four Centuries of Indian printmaking, Delhi Art Gallery, 2012.
28 Kipling, J.L., Annual Report of Mayo School of Art, Lahore, 1879-80.
30 Ibid.
Mayo school of Art which were printed and published in the ‘Journal of Indian Art and Industry’. The journal was founded in 1884 which was printed and published by W. Griggs from London, for the Government of India. J.L.Kipling wrote regularly in the journal and the drawings and illustrations by him as well as by students of the school were published in the journal which gives insights on the kind of work carried on at the school in its formative years.

**Conclusion:**

As discussed so far, one can see that the art of Punjab in 19th century can be divided into four styles or categories. First were the painting created by the court painters for the elite class. These included names of Purkhu, Kishan Singh, Bishan Singh, Kehar Singh, Nikka, Chhaiju and also European artists like Schofft. Second were the art works created by the European professional and amateur artists who worked for the patrons, officials or for themselves. Some of them like Emily Eden, C.S. Hardinge sketched in Punjab and after returning to England got their sketches copied, transferred into prints and published the folios or books. Third category was of the artists who worked in the bazaar style, mainly at Lahore and Amritsar and catered to the tastes of newly developed middle class, literate public and worked in painting and printmaking medium. Their amalgamated style owes much to the print making practices as it truly fulfills the function and purpose of making prints-multiples made for masses, affordable art which could reach the ordinary household in form of books, magazines, posters or individual prints, which paved way for the present day prints. Fourth category consists of the artists, art students of the Mayo school of Art, Lahore. Trained in academic art, they sketched and studied objects; monuments etc. and their drawings were used to transfer into lithographs and published. Artists like Kapur Singh, Amir Baksh, and Ram Singh worked in this style. The idea of the use of printmaking medium for aesthetic outcome was not known to them. The technique was used as a craft or vocational medium.

All these styles existed simultaneously in the company period, in the second half of the 19th century in Punjab. It would be interesting to see their developments in the 20th century and the role they played in the progress of printmaking as a medium.

**References:**