

**1999**

This calendar commemorates

**THE ENDURING IMAGE**

**Treasures from The British Museum**

*exhibited at*

National Museum, Delhi

and

National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai

from October 1997 to May 1998,

to celebrate 50 years of India's Independence

*co-patrons*

H.E. The President of India, Shri K.R. Narayanan

and H.M. Queen Elizabeth II

*jointly organised by*

Department of Culture, Government of India,

The British Council, The British Museum,

National Museum and National Gallery of Modern Art

All the artefacts in the Exhibition

were carried throughout the tour

of the Exhibition by



**Celebrating 50 years of International Operations**

**1948 - 1998**

Air-India also acknowledges with courtesy,  
Dr. Romila Thapar  
and use of material from Robert Skelton's introduction  
Miniature Paintings from the Padshahnama  
from the Heritage of India, Series 5, an Air-India publication

Torc Gold, Swinford, Co. Mayo, Ireland. 14th-13th centuries B.C.

Air-India gratefully acknowledges  
The British Council & The British Museum  
for use of colour plates and adaptation of plate  
descriptions from the exhibition catalogue  
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## Air-India & The Arts

A Puss Moth took to the sky from Karachi airport for Bombay via Ahmedabad on 15 October 1932. Piloting this fledgling flight was a young man who was to pioneer civil aviation in India, J.R.D. Tata. Today 65 years later and celebrating 50 years of international operations (1948-1998), Air-India continues in its role as the national carrier. More than just the national airline, Air-India is also India's cultural ambassador to the world. The Air-India aircraft are a microcosm of India. The decor, the music, the crew uniforms, all blend to create an Indian ambience and atmosphere.

**Air-India** initiated the international promotion of Indian art and culture. Over the years, Air-India has established one of the largest corporate collections of contemporary, classical and traditional art. These works are on display in Air-India's booking offices around the world. They serve as a constant reminder of the richness of tradition in India's heritage.

It has been a corporate policy to assist artists, craftsmen and performers by sponsoring their travel – extending the horizons of not just the Visual, but also the Performing Arts. This policy has not only promoted Indian culture across the globe, but has also brought a variety of cultural activities to India.

It was essentially the ancient travel routes that linked civilizations. It was from traversing these routes, whether it was the enterprising trader, the curious traveller or the pious pilgrim, who ventured beyond their known domain to seek the unknown, that there emerged and developed contact between distant cultures and civilizations.

A distinguished historian has said 'A civilization was not an island unto itself. Its growth was dependent on a continuing inter-face with other cultures. The most impressive civilizations were those which borrowed and lent their languages, technologies, artefacts and beliefs. Yet the end result was not an undifferentiated *mélange*, for each was centred in its own needs and its own creative articulation.' (Dr. Romila Thapar).

It is for these reasons that Air-India's corporate policy sponsors cultural events... that there may be interaction between cultures and civilizations, between languages and beliefs, between techniques and artefacts.

During the celebration of the 50 years of India's Independence, Air-India provided its services to bring two major Exhibitions from London to India.

In January 1997 Air-India brought an Imperial Mughal illustrated manuscript album to India. The *Padshahnama* was loaned by H.M. Queen Elizabeth II from The Royal Library at Windsor Castle.

The **Padshahnama** or 'Chronicle of the Emperor' is an account of the first regnal decade of the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan. The album is dated 1656-7 and is superbly illustrated with some of the finest Mughal miniature paintings in the Imperial tradition. Just as the Taj Mahal epitomises the architectural achievement of Shah Jahan's epoch, it is the paintings of this album that provide us with the single most eloquent testimony to the splendour that marked life at court during his reign.

The first exhibition of the *Padshahnama* was held at the National Museum, Delhi. To commemorate this event, twelve selected miniature paintings were published by Air-India in its portfolio series, *Heritage of India*.

**The Enduring Image**, is the largest travelling exhibition ever mounted by The British Museum.

**The British Museum** was founded in 1753 and is based on the Collections of the polymath Sir Hans Sloane to which were immediately added a number of other national Collections. These Foundation Collections were housed in Montague House, until the present magnificent neo-classical building was designed and constructed by Sir Robert Smirke during the 1830s - 40s.

'The concept behind this grand exhibition, is two-fold. Firstly, it takes an ancient Indian idea – the importance of the human image in conveying ideas and concepts and applies it to cultures throughout the world and across time.

'Secondly, it presents for the first time in India, a conspectus of the collections of the British Museum. The Museum has always seen its role as one of guardianship – holding its collection in trust for all mankind and exhibitions such as this bring this venerable 18th century concept right up to date. The opportunity to bring *The Enduring Image* to India fits directly into the international role of the Museum as it enters the next millennium.' (T. Richard Blurton, Asst. Keeper, Dept. of Oriental Antiquities.)

**The Enduring Image** was inaugurated by H.E. The President of India, Shri K.R. Narayanan and H.M. Queen Elizabeth II at the National Museum, Delhi on 13 October 1997.

**The Enduring Image** has been described as an exhibition of 'not Indian treasures alone but one in which India takes its proper place as one of the major world civilizations.'

The artefacts exhibited are items of great antiquity – jewellery, sculpture, plaques, seals, prints, bronze and stone from ancient and historical civilizations, representing the human form.

For this exhibition, the logistics of the cargo requirements and the safe carriage of over 300 artefacts was complicated. It involved the movement of approximately 16,000 kilos of showcases and 15,000 kilos of artefacts. Special arrangements were made in the cargo hold for the safety of each shipment.

**Air-India** brings you on the eve of the millennium, a small selection of these masterpieces, as the visuals in this calendar for 1999.

The calendar opens with the auspicious Indian god, Ganesha, who is invoked at the beginning of all ceremonies to shower good fortune. Ganesha was the opening exhibit at *The Enduring Image*. After the first image the main monthly visuals follow the sequence of the sections of The British Museum and the layout of the Exhibition, as it was displayed in Delhi.

The smaller supporting visuals, alongside the date pad do not follow any set pattern, but are basically chosen as a contrast to the main visual, either in civilization or style.

May we pause to remember that whilst we continue towards a relentless future with science and technology, the heritage of our past, our ancient civilizations and their art forms, bear silent testimony of their contribution to human progress – a contribution that is today preserved only in our Museums.



Helmet mask Wood, painted. Nigeria, Yoruba people. 19th-20th century A.D.  
No mask Wood, painted. Japan. Signed, Norinari and Hosho Daiyu.  
13th-19th century A.D. (above right)



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