

Photo courtesy: The private collection of Debashish Chakraverty

Featured above: The creative team at Air India commemorated the introduction of the airline's first Boeing 747 with a new theme: "Your Palace In The Sky". "The motto was used when Air India introduced its 'jharokha window' livery on the new 747s in 1971. The slogan was painted on the rear fuselage of every aircraft," says Debasish Chakraverty, a financial investor whose private collection of Air India memorabilia spans 1969 to 1989, the period during which his father piloted 707s and 747s.



AIR-INDIA

Thursday 6th. May 1971
London (Heathrow) Airport

"Emperor Ashoka"
Boeing 747 B



Champagne · Hors d'Oeuvres



A brochure for one of Emperor Ashoka's first flights.

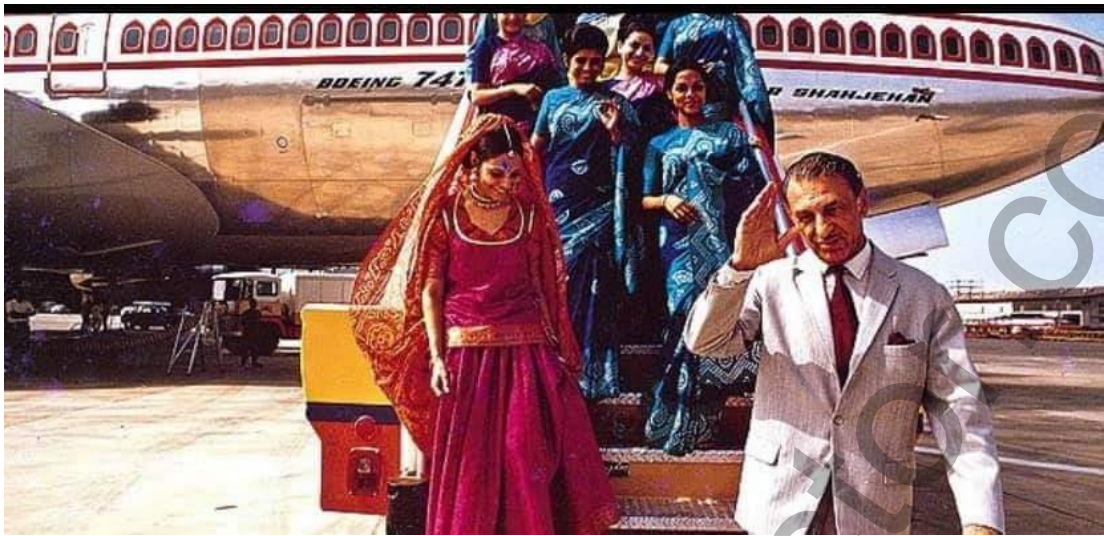


Photo courtesy: The private collection of Debashish Chakraverty

Featured above: The bar in the first-class section in the first Air India 747, christened Emperor Ashoka—“They also served as the centre for what was then the in-flight entertainment; magazines in distinctive red folders were placed in holders on the side of the bar,” says Chakraverty.



Photo courtesy: Colaba Arts Gallery

Featured above: The first two 747s featured pink and blue (pictured) panels in alternate compartments. The window panels are embellished with episodes from the legends of Krishna.

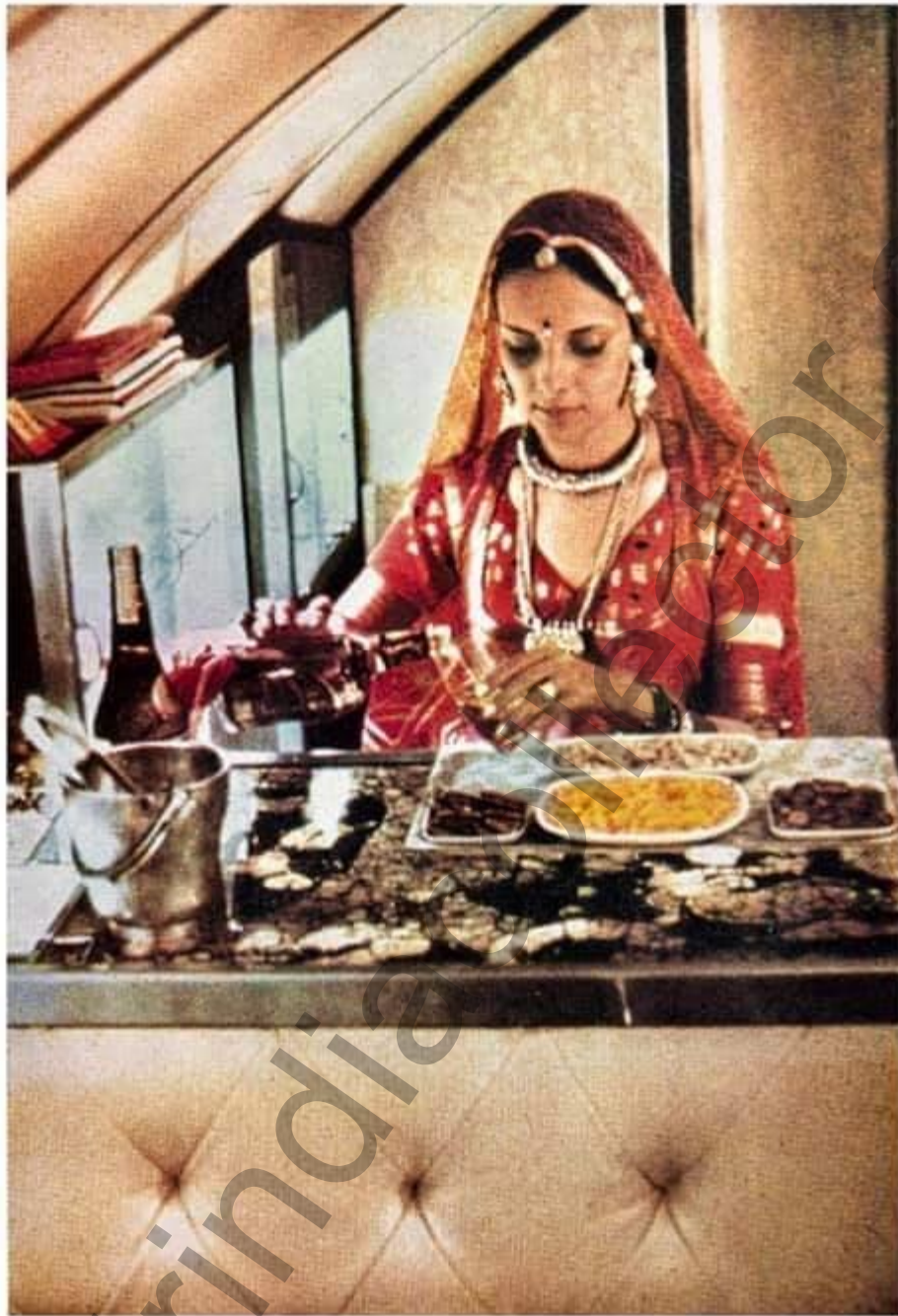


Photo courtesy: Colaba Arts Gallery

Featured above: A hostess pours a drink for guests inside the Maharaja Lounge of the Emperor Ashoka. Her vibrant uniform is made in a colourful bandhani print from Rajasthan. This image is part of a private collection owned by Mumbai-based gallerists and collectors Pallavi and Sumit Sabnis.



A ticket jacket, boarding card, cabin luggage tag, and flight timetable for the 747, from the mid to late 1970s, all from Chakraverty's collection. Photos courtesy: The private collection of Debashish Chakraverty

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Featured above: The Maharaja Lounge of the Emperor Ashoka was accessed by a spiral staircase, seen in bottom left. “The architecture of the Maharaja Lounge gives an insight into the creative people who were behind it all, such as artists from the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda and Shantiniketan. JRD Tata took keen interest in the design, from the napkins to the tapestries on the walls. He made sure that everything was done according to his taste,” says Sumit.



Photo courtesy: The private collection of Debashish Chakraverty

Featured above: A flight attendant aboard the Emperor Shahjehan, the second 747, serves JRD Tata, then chairman of Air India, in silverware, on the day of its delivery on 4 May 1971.



Photo courtesy: The private collection of Debashish Chakraverty

Featured above: A flight attendant serves guests on the upper deck lounge of the Emperor Ashoka.



Photo courtesy: The private collection of Debashish Chakraverty

Featured above: The Maharaja Lounge in the upper deck of the first two aircraft—the Emperor Ashoka and the Emperor Shahjehan—introduced patrons to art from the Gupta period. The murals in the lounge were adapted from the celebrated frescoes of the Ajanta caves in Maharashtra, illustrating scenes from the Jataka tales.



Photo courtesy: The private collection of Debashish Chakraverty

Featured above: The designs on the bulkhead partition in the first-class cabin of Emperor Ashoka replicate the exquisite paisley motif seen in Kashmiri textiles.



Photo courtesy: The private collection of Debashish Chakraverty

Featured above: The distinct white facade with a row of red jharokha arches was a signature of the Emperor fleet. “The aircraft was Air India’s longest-serving 747, until it was retired in 2000,” says Chakraverty.



Photo courtesy: The private collection of Debashish Chakraverty

Featured above: “The flight attendants in the upper deck lounge of the Emperor Ashoka in their new uniforms that debuted along with the 747—the sari, the churidar kameez and the trouser suit (for European and Japanese flight attendants),” says Chakraverty.



Emperor Ashoka, Air India's first Boeing 747, on the day it was delivered to Mumbai airport in 1971. | Photo: Debasish Chakraverty / Private collection of Capt. D.M. Chakraverty



Air India bought Emperor Ashoka on March 22, 1971.
(Photos: Debasish Chakraverty / Private collection of
Capt. D.M. Chakraverty)

