

A TRIBUTE TO J.R.D. TATA

THE MAGIC OF THE MAHARAJAH

Air-India International was formed in March 1948, and right from the very start was determined to be the best airline in the world. This determination also extended to their brand and advertising. The Maharajah as a brand icon was already used by Air-India Ltd (formerly Tata Airlines Ltd.) and came to the forefront of Air-India International's advertising. Under stalwarts like Tata, Kooka and Cowasjee, the Maharajah came to epitomise the brand, and was used extensively by the airline in many different ways.

In this exhibit, we are attempting to display a cross-section of material where the airline used the image of the Maharajah. The material in this exhibit predominantly dates back to the 1950s and 1960s.

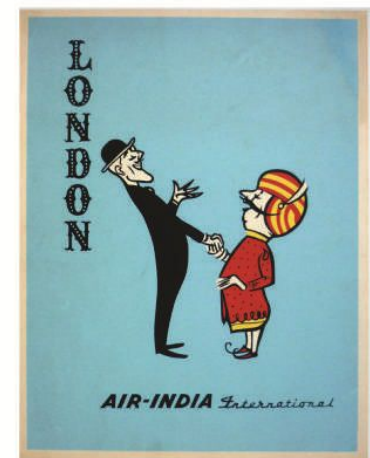
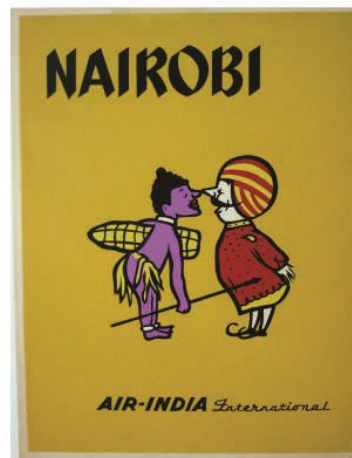
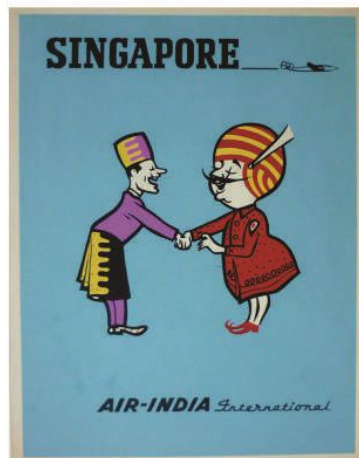
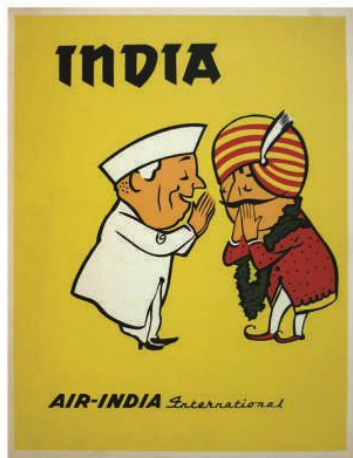
Also shown here are four rare posters dating back to the early 1950s



15 October 1962. J.R.D. Tata and Bobby Kooka in front of the airplane in which Tata re-enacted his 1932 flight from Karachi to Bombay exactly 30 years ago. Visible behind them is the newly purchased Boeing 707-437 jet, powered by four Rolls-Royce Conway engines.



The Roving Trophy of the Air-India Art Studio with the Maharajah dressed in an artists smock, holding a paint brush and palette. (Photograph early 1970s)



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About us

We are two amateur hobbyists and collectors. We believe that Air-India was the finest airline in the world, and the Maharajah was the greatest brand icon created by any commercial enterprise anywhere in the world. Together they carried their passengers into a magical world of fun, comfort and caring, and brought joy to the lives of everyone they touched.

Our mission is to curate and preserve this rich and proud legacy.

To know more, visit our websites: www.airindiacollector.com and www.indianairmails.com



Vivek Matthai
vivek_matthai@yahoo.com

Air-India Travel Poster



1968
Air-India - ArtStudio
Catalogue #122

Visualizer & Artist- Surti
Printed By Prasad Process Private Ltd., Madras

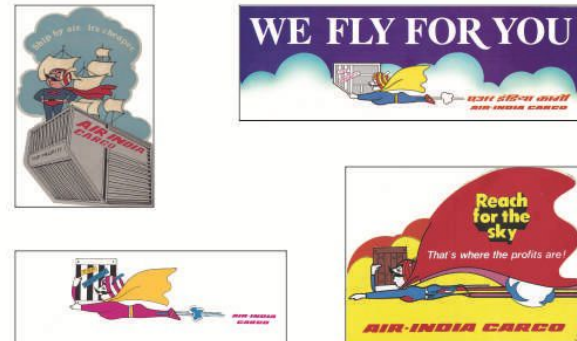
Air-India In-Flight Service Coasters

These are from the 1950s, and early 1960s. These coasters were used for the inflight beverage service. The unique design made them much sought after as collectibles, and passengers from across the world often preserved them as souvenirs. Here we see the first series of coaster designs where the Maharajah is greeting the other person dressed in a costume relevant to the destination.



Air-India Freight & Cargo Stickers

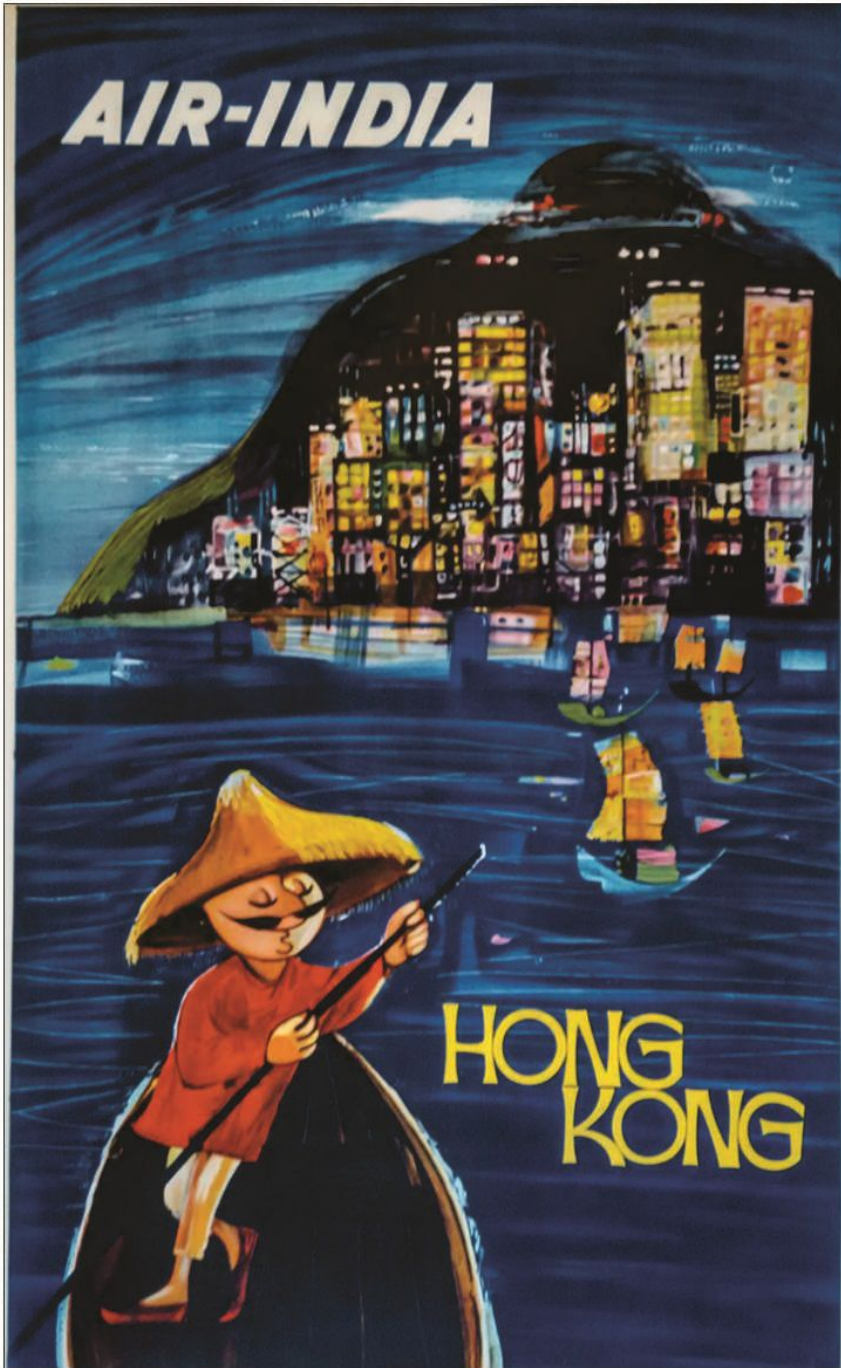
These were used as promotional material and distributed to cargo agents and freight booking offices. They found their way to delivery vans and booking offices, and got fairly visible for a brief period. Sadly, not many of these survive.



← Air-India Travel Posters are in a class by themselves. Starting literally from the time the airline was born in 1948, these posters were extremely popular, and became instantly collectible. It is only much later that poster design became popular as an art form. Barring few exceptions, the names of the artist are not signed on these posters, and they were denied the recognition they truly deserved. A few posters were designed by external agencies like Shilpi and JWT (now HTA), but the vast majority, and by far the best work came from within the Air-India Art Studio itself.

THE MAGIC OF THE MAHARAJAH

Air-India Travel Poster



1965
Air-India - Art Studio
Catalogue #79

Visualizer - Cowasji
Artist - Surti
Printed By Prasad Process Private Ltd., Madras.

Artwork for Advertisement Hoardings

The iconic Air-India hoarding site at India House, Kemp's Corner in Mumbai, and later also at the Air-India building, Nariman Point in Mumbai was a traffic stopper. Anyone passing by from there would eagerly watch out for the newest designs. These represented the finest examples of wit, creativity and relevance, of Air-India advertising. Often cheeky, and sometimes downright disrespectful, it is amazing what all the airline could get away with at that time. Here we have a selection of original art work for these hoardings, painted using water colours going back to the 1960s.



THE MAGIC OF THE MAHARAJAH

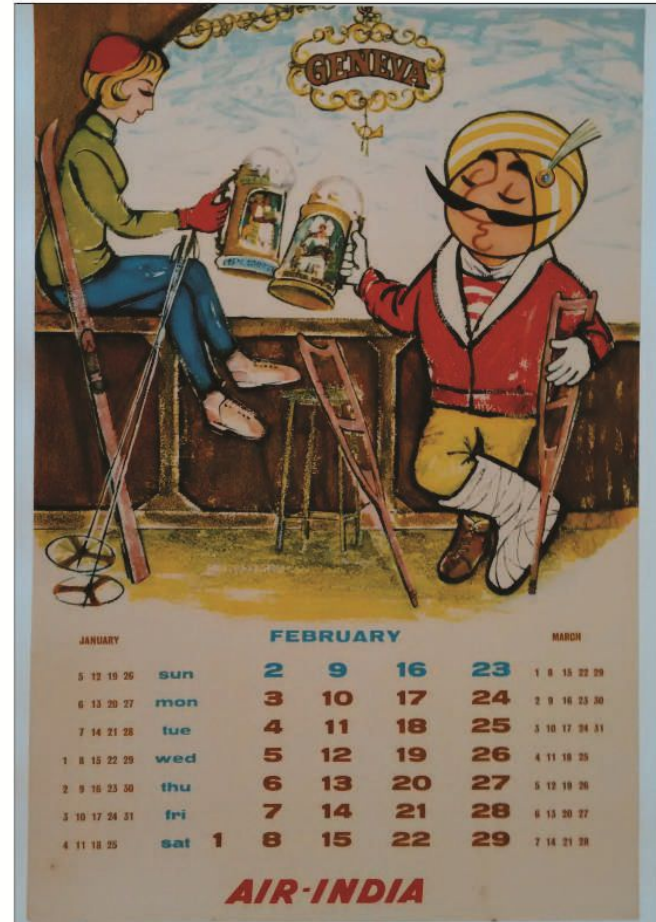
The Iconic 1964 Calendar

The airline was always known for coming out with the best designed wall calendars, and they were much in demand. On four occasions, the airline produced calendars incorporating popular poster designs, including one with all Tomi Ungerer posters. Here we see sheets from the 1964 calendar including some designs that won multiple awards in India and abroad. This was the first calendar incorporating travel poster designs produced by the airline.



1962
Catalogue #99
First Prize - ASTA International
Poster Contest U.S.A. 1962.

Visualizer - Cowasji
Artist - Save
Printed By Prasad Process Private Ltd., Madras



1961
Catalogue #93

Visualizer & Artist - Shetye
Printed By Prasad Process Private Ltd., Madras

THE MAGIC OF THE MAHARAJAH

Air-India Travel Poster

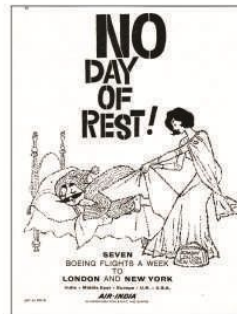
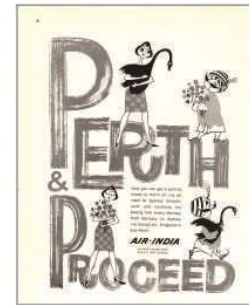


1969
Catalogue #158

Visualizer & Artist - Tomi Ungerer
Printed By Prasad Process Private Ltd., Madras

Newspaper & Magazine Advertisements

Air-India advertised widely in popular newspapers and magazines worldwide. The Maharajah was oftentimes at the centre of their advertising, and brought in his usual dose of humour. Here we see a selection of advertisements over the years.



THE MAGIC OF THE MAHARAJAH

Air-India Travel Poster

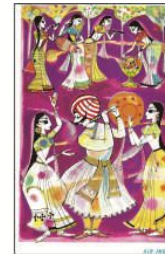
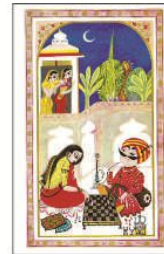
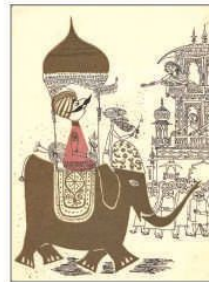


1969
Air-India Art Studio
Catalogue #152

Visualizer - Shetye
Artist - Gupte
Printed By Prasad Process Private Ltd., Madras

Menu Cards

The vast majority of menu cards for in flight service carried images of paintings by eminent artists, and other historical artefacts, all from the airline's considerable art collection. Here we see some examples of menu cards where the Maharajah made his appearance.



Safety Card

This is a scarce Safety Card from the Air-India Lockheed L-1049 Super Constellation going back to the 1950s. Here we see our chivalrous Maharajah serving his guests in a life raft and has removed his royal coat which is used as a flag to attract attention of the rescue vessel. It is amazing how the airline could manage to pack in humour even into something as mundane as a Flight Safety Card.



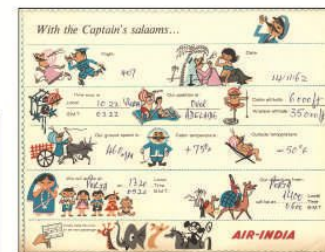
Do Not Disturb

Passengers would hang these little danglers above their seats to ensure they enjoyed an undisturbed nap while on board. As usual, our Maharajah makes an appearance even here.



Flight Status Card

These are from the 1950s and the captain would fill these up and pass them around the cabin for passengers to get an update on the flight status. Given the interesting design, it is not surprising that many passengers chose to take them home. The bold design seems to have been ok for the airline to use then, but surely would have raised hackles if they were used today.



THE MAGIC OF THE MAHARAJAH

Air-India Travel Poster



1965
Air-India Art Studio
Catalogue #107

Visualizer - Cowasji
Artist - Surti

Printed By Prasad Process Private Ltd., Madras

Baggage Decals

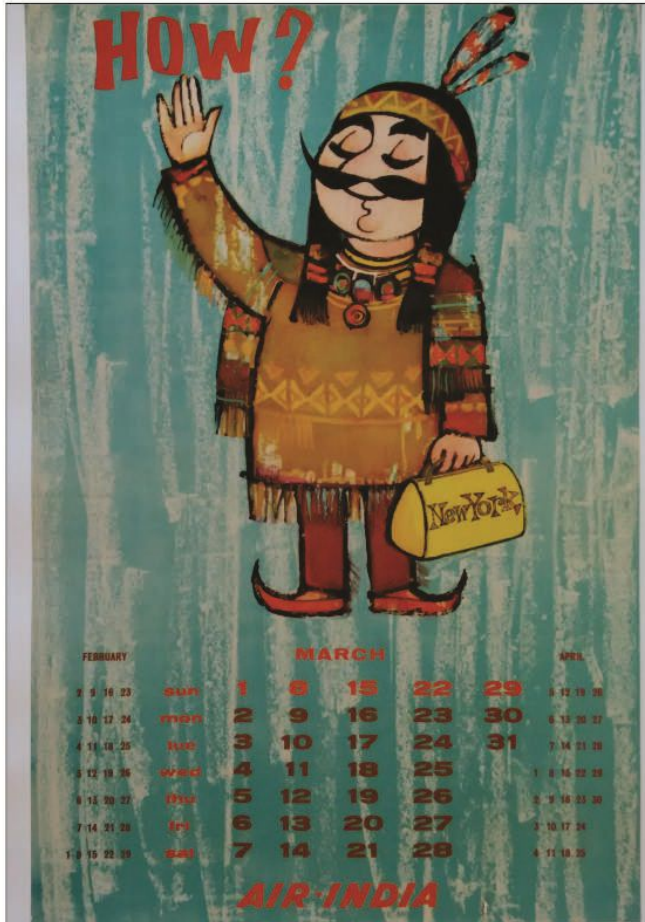
These decals were pre-gummed on the reverse surface, and meant to be affixed on passenger luggage as a reminder of their journey on Air-India. A few of these were waiting in the seat pocket folder inside the aircraft for each passenger. Again dating back to the 1950s and early 1960s, they incorporate the same design as the airline coasters displayed earlier, but were in use for a limited period, and hence the number of destinations featured is also lesser.



THE MAGIC OF THE MAHARAJAH

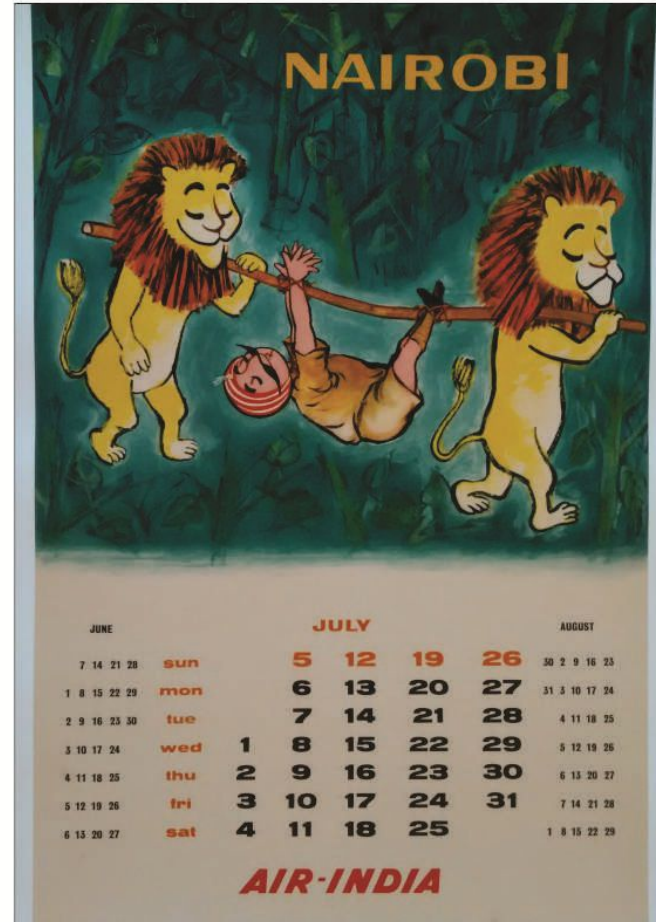
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1960
Catalogue #75

Visualizer - Cowasji
Artist - Desai

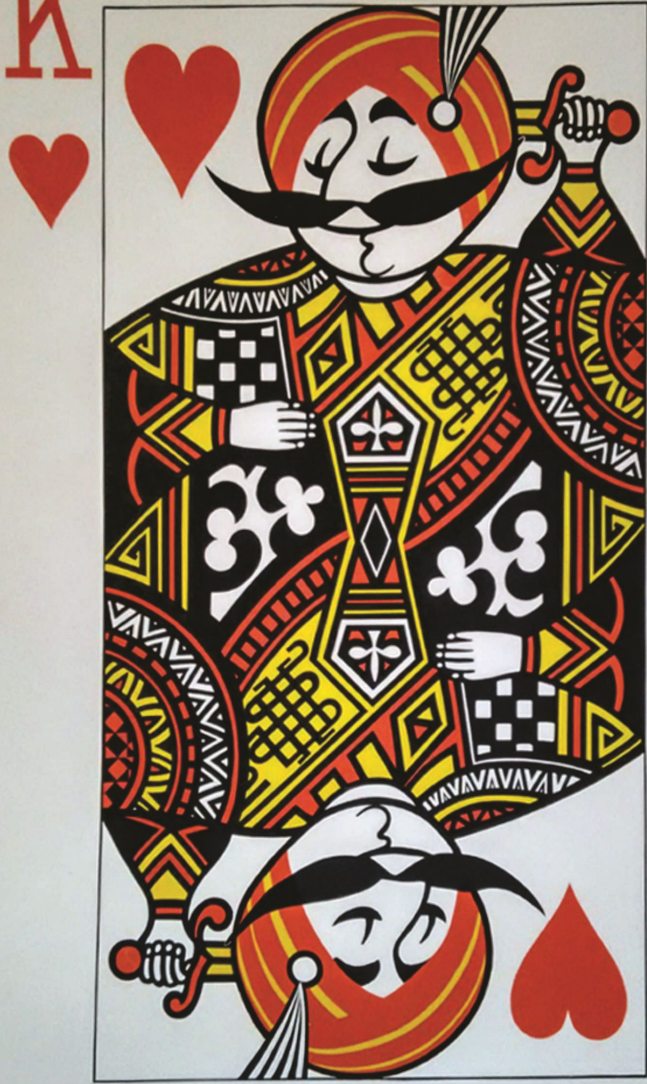


1963
Catalogue #106

Visualizer & Artist - Shetye

Air-India Travel Poster

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AIR-INDIA K

Artwork for Advertisement Hoardings

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Air-India Travel Poster



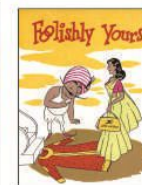
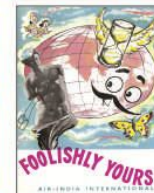
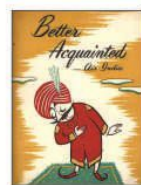
AIR-INDIA

Customer Feedback Forms

These customer feedback forms are from the 1950s and 1960s. They convey a simple message:
The Maharajah loves you (the passenger).
Now how do you complain in a form so filled with love.

On Board Reading Material

Back in the 1950s and 1960s, there was little by way of inflight entertainment as we know it today. Air-India innovated by producing a series of publications for passengers to read on board to pass the time. These are now recognised as creative masterpieces because of their language and artwork. The books shown below are in chronological order from the 1950s thru the 1970s. Several million copies of Foolishly Yours (2nd version) were printed, and it would qualify as a best seller in its own right.



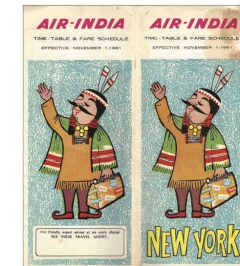
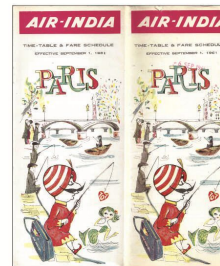
THE MAGIC OF THE MAHARAJAH

Air-India Travel Poster



Timetables

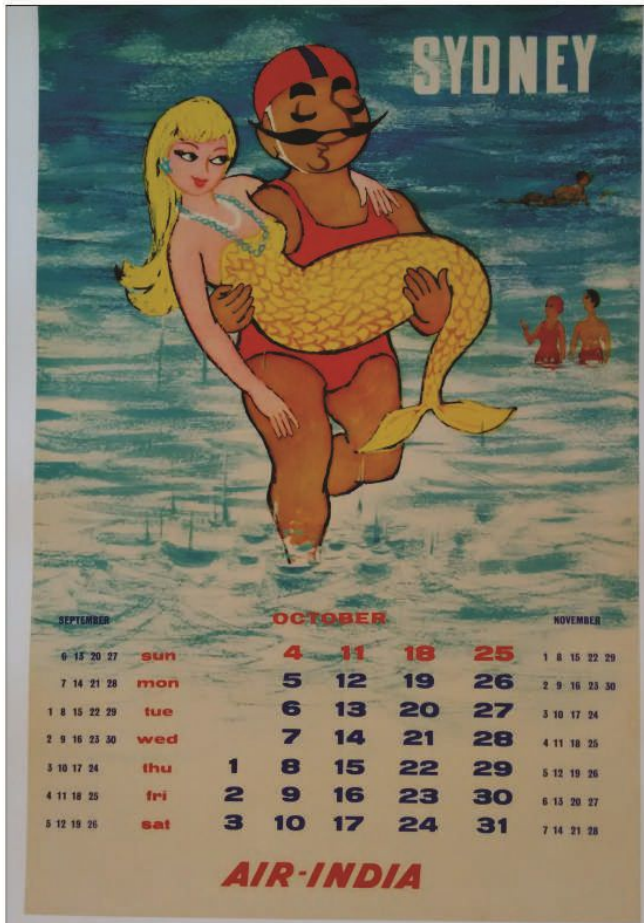
The art and design of the cover page of the Air-India timetable was par excellence, and unlike that of any other airline in the world. The images and illustrations used on the cover have evolved over the first 30 years of the airlines existence. The Maharajah made his appearance on several of these timetable covers, always showing interesting aspects of his unique personality.



THE MAGIC OF THE MAHARAJAH

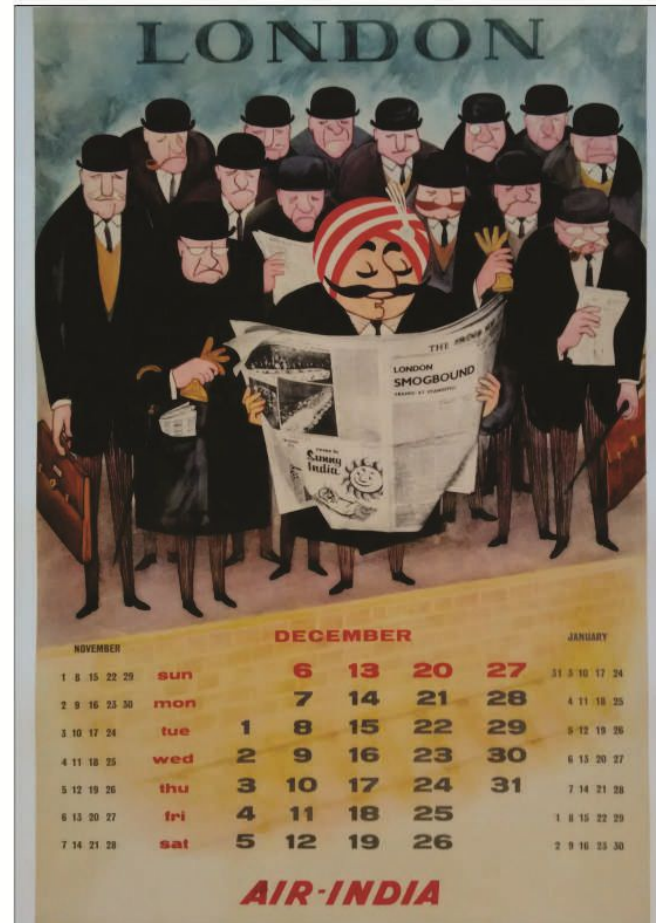
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1963
Catalogue #105

Visualizer & Artist - Shetye



1961
Catalogue #82
 🏆 First Prize - National Awards India 1961
 🏆 First Prize - International Tourist Poster Contest India 1962
 🏆 Merit Award - Indian Institute of Art of Industry India 1963.

Visualizer & Artist - Shetye
Printed By Prasad Process Private Ltd., Madras