

The Evolution Of Visual Communication Design: The Role Of The Colonial Printing Press In Lahore

Dr. Syed Farjood Ailya Rizvi¹, Dr. Muhammad Asghar², Dr. Wardah Naeem Bukhari³

Abstract

This study discussed how the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century changed communication design, especially through the printing press. The introduction of the printing press brought many new print media formats, which were very significant in Lahore during and after the colonial period. The specimens from the Punjab Government Press are retrieved from the Punjab Government Archives in Lahore. The research is a qualitative analysis of printed specimens developed in the subcontinent and continued to the contemporary period. The research is an exploratory data collection. The specimens are the visual catalogue of the elements that shaped information shared and presented to the public. This includes the typestyles, wood engravings, coat of arms and newspapers. The introduction of photography to the reproduction of illustrations in the newspaper 'The Illustrated London News' is studied to understand the context of visual communication evolution and the role of the printing press in Lahore. The archive specimens found during the research are digitally preserved and physical documents are fading away over the stretch of time.

Keywords: *Printing press, Visual communication design, Wood engravings, The Illustrated London news.*

Introduction:

East India Company (EIC) established a printing press at London in 1600 to print documents. EIC arranged its first press at Madras in 1761 through missionaries. The press launched the Calcutta Gazette in 1784. Mirat-al-Akhbar, the first Persian newspaper was founded in 1822 by Ram Mohan Roy. EIC emerged during the later period of 18th century as dominant in the region (Emiko, 2013). The English language press had launched in 1872 the Civil and Military Gazette of India at Lahore and Shimla. During the middle of the 19th Century, English newspapers were spread in all Indian regions. These newspapers were created for European immigrants. The local language newspapers, which were patronized by foreign missionaries for preaching Christianity, followed the English style. The newspaper communicated Western culture and knowledge to the native (massmediaassignments.wordpress.com, 2017).

Newspapers provided people with a visual way to experience news. The illustrations of portraits and landscapes made the newspapers more interesting and helped attract more readers. Before, people mostly read text, but these images added colour and life to the news. This became the forerunner of mass-media communication. The woodblock engravings were the process of reproducing illustration impressions in thousands for the press. The boxwood woodblocks were

more durable than copper and steel. The woodblocks made it possible to print text and images to be printed together. This was an innovative method to share useful knowledge through visual

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of Graphic Design, University of the Punjab Lahore, Pakistan. Email: farjood.cad@pu.edu.pk

² (Corresponding Author) Director/Associate Professor, Institute of Art and Design, Government College University Faisalabad, Pakistan. Email: asghar@gcuf.edu.pk

³ Assistant Professor, Department of Graphic Design, Lahore College for Women University Lahore, Pakistan. Email: wardah.naeem@lcwu.edu.pk

communication inexpensively to the masses. The Illustrated London News (ILN) periodicals started in 1842 took the lead.

The ILN introduced its first issue through introducing the wood engraving as a technique of making pictorial translations of the authenticity of events and occupied the expanding market. (NC State University, 2020).

The Evolution of Engraving and Printing Techniques

The wood engravings enhanced the use of images with types for advertisements and communication design to the masses. The process dominated books, newspapers and magazine publications. Niepce contributed to the search for a cost-effective solution to prepare printing plates. John Calvin Moss of New York discovered the photoengraving method in 1871 of transferring line work (images without tonal shades) into metal letterpress. This process was cost-effective and time-efficient for preparing printing plates (Philip B. Meggs, 2006). The Industrial Revolution paved the way to produce halftone photo-processed images replacing wood and metal engraving to print illustrations and visuals close to real-life (NC State University, 2020).

Daguerreotypes were invented and paved the way for halftone printing to produce photographs of images in tiny dots in 1882. This process took over the wood engravings in the 1890s (NC State University, 2020).



Figure 1. A Scene in Shantytown, New York, March 4, 1880, the first American Newspaper The Daily Graphic photograph printed using a coarse halftone single line screen, <https://sbmhist128.wordpress.com/2011/06/23/photography-in-newspapers/>

Printing and communication flourished with the development of the telegraph and railway. The graphics of The ILN became famous and people framed the visuals to decorate the walls of living rooms (Orme, 1986). The halftone process to reproduce photographs onto paper was first time used by ILN in 1887 (Ibid). Every picture was to tell a story during the 19th century. Realism was a guide in the text and picture narrations. Artists during the Victorian era created artworks that showed themes from history and exotic places. The pictures were the medium for looking at the world during the early half of the 19th century. The masses were provided information and entertainment thrived for the public. The huge number of pictures were produced during the 1800 and 1901 and were perhaps larger than had been printed earlier (Jessop, 1986).

The ILN captured a miniature view of India and documented events of the period. These views captured visuals in form of illustrations to see the documentaries about Indian cities, combat plans, castles and buildings. By viewing these illustrations, anyone can visualize the environments from a time ago. It facilitated the readers to understand news by communicating through type and image relationships. The visuals supported captions to convey exact situations. The ILN's key feature was visual communication, an economical educational medium and a famous school for the period. This medium offered visual exploration through pictures reacting to history. Thus, the visual communication design supported the authenticity of news (Ibid, 22- 26'.

The ILN exercised newspaper broadcasting through skillful drawings of the scenes of the Punjab Exhibition in Lahore, the Governor of Punjab in a camel carriage, the Punjab Exhibition building an imaginary version which began in June 1864 by architect Baines, C.E. and the image published in January 1864 (Aijazuddin, 2004).

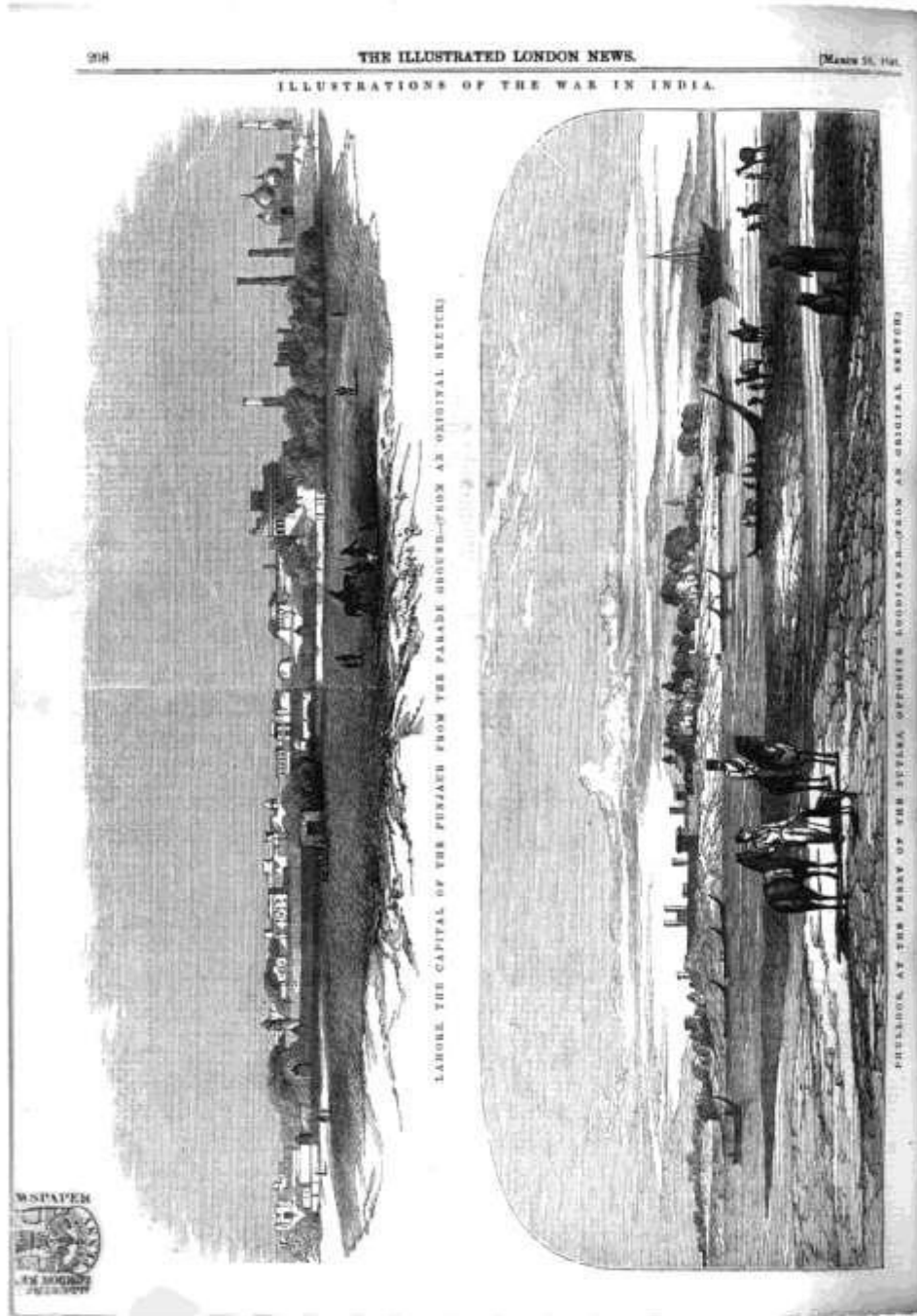


Figure 2. View of the Capital of Punjab Lahore,² The Illustrated London News March 28, 1846.

https://books.google.com.pk/books?id=3dBCAQAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

² This page is also available at The Punjab Government Archives, Lahore

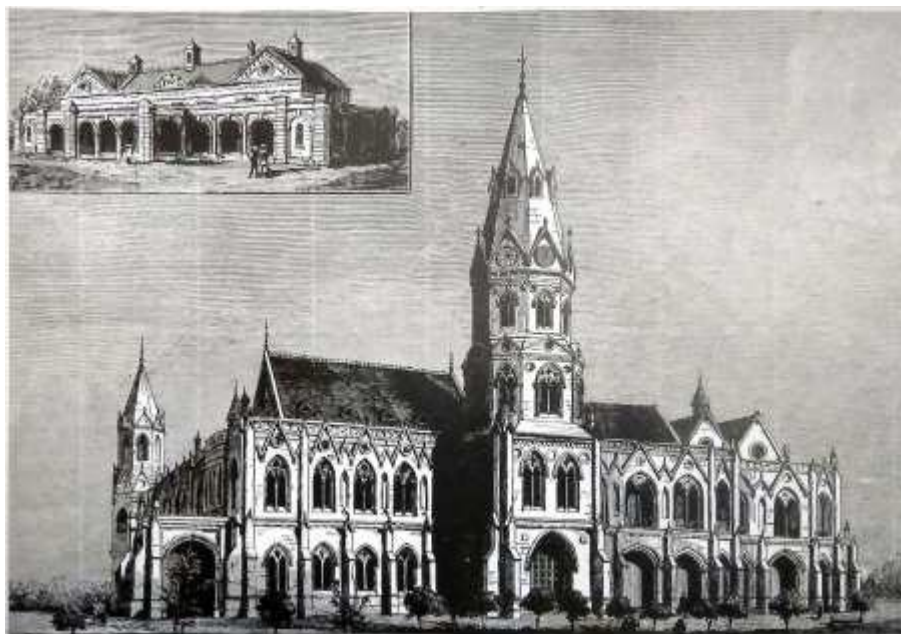


Figure 3. The Government College and Oriental College Lahore, wood engraving published in *The Illustrated London News* November 24, 1883, **Lahore illustrated views of the 19th Century** by F.S. Aijazuddin. P 147



Figure 4. A view of Government College, Lahore, by W. Purdon, 1877.

http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00routesdata/150_0_159_9/lahore%20report/colonial/colonial.html

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Development of Printing Press in Lahore

Photography reached Lahore in 1840, however, there are no records as of these days. The photographs of the Golden Temple by Italian Felice Beato were taken between 1857 and 1888 after the fall of Sikhs. After the partition of India, the name Chaacha F.E. Chaudary was famous in Lahore (Sheikh, 2006). Lahore Chronicles was the first newspaper in Lahore in 1849.

Muhammad Azim started the Lahore Chronicles and it continued till 1857. After World War I, the economic crisis forced the British to leave the captured colonies. The printing press industry was separated by the two-nation theory into Hindu and Muslim press publications. Muslim League lost the elections in 1937 and the Muslim printing press gained popularity. The Urdu language evolved in 900 years under the local influences by Persian, Arabic and Turkic. It

flourished during 1206-1527 in Delhi Sultanate of Uttar Pradesh India. The writing direction was opposite to the English from right to left. During the reign of Mughal emperor Shahjahan, the Urdu language was promoted. It facilitated as a medium of communication between the foreign and native languages in the region. Urdu carried all the sounds of other languages around the world. Urdu took over the Persian language used for administration. The British promoted this language in the region (Chatterjee, 2011).

The art education was initiated by South Kensington. The art and design trainings were focused on images placed in the museums attached to the schools (Swallow, 2017). The typesetting of Arabic script was arranged by the printing manufacturing firms in London. The prayer book by Henry Martyn in 1818 was composed in Persian typography for the Indians. The initial litho-press to produce Urdu publications in the subcontinent was set up in Kanpur in 1830.

There were few paper craft centers before the British arrived. The paper mills were constructed to supply paper in India and many prisoners were trained for handmade paper production. The printing and publication techniques of the 18th century laid the foundations for the local printing press (Emiko, 2013).

Mughal and Sikh rulers made Lahore an administrative centre. In 1849 the city of Lahore was the capital of colonial Punjab and Koh-i-Noor newspaper was founded in the same period.

Lately in 1850s the printing industry focus shifted from Delhi to Lahore. The print media and newspaper circulation had an impact on society. The colonial regime set up printing presses in the city which made it the centre for the manufacturing of printing press activities 'ibid'. The printing presses published variety of books. It also published texts about medicine, simple school subjects, folk stories and popular poems. However, books about science, history and travel subjects were rare in publications. The growth of printing presses facilitated the people to receive and share information. It was medium for commoners to access knowledge and ideas (Ibid).

In 1858, the first Urdu daily newspaper Avadh Akhbar appeared. The Chattar Manzil and Farhat Bakhsh palace was composed on the masthead of the newspaper to represent the historical richness of Lucknow. The building design aimed to present the glory of city having cultural and historical background. The title page is similar to a famous Victorian weekly The Illustrated London News (ILN). Many local newspapers were inspired and adapted the ILN design. The newspaper Avadh Akhbar followed the design style to display the news magazine as contemporary and professional in that period. It was influenced by the colonial design of news coverage and advertisements (Stark, 2012). Black and white illustrations in the newspaper frequently occupied the newspaper spaces from 1857 to 1906. The coloured illustrations started appearing in 1906 onwards. Halftone printing became the standard process for the reproduction of photographs of events and objects in the newspapers, books, magazines and posters. The printing press raised awareness and visual communication regarding the view of India 'ibid 3-4'.

The Koh-e-Noor started in 1850 in Lahore was the first Urdu newspaper. The British sponsored its founder Munshi Harsukh Raey. This was the largest circulated Urdu newspaper of the time. The second newspaper was Darya-e-Noor which was discontinued due to the opposition of

British rule. These newspapers have occasional handmade pictures (mcnuml.wordpress.com). Lahore and Delhi were the centre of paper making industry in the subcontinent during the Sultanate period (Sheikh, 2006). By the end of the 19th century, the hand-made paper was prohibited to be used in government workplaces and the British started the import of paper produced by the machine-made process. The machine-made paper was cost-effective and captured the market. Eventually, the local employees who made hand-made papers lost their jobs. The machine-made paper industry flourished before the World War II period (Tiwari, n.d.).

Evolution of Indian Industrial and Craft Culture

Renaissance separated artists and designers of Europe. The institutes of art education separated the designations of artists and craftsmen. The ideology followed in India by the colonials. During the early decade of the 20th century, lithography was a craft at Mayo School of Arts (MSA) Lahore. The print jobs required a printing press to reproduce card and bill headers. In 1915 a department of Photolithography was formed to import latest equipment. The principal of MSA Lionel Heath stated that it was required to meet the future needs of advertising rising in India. It has showed lately that many multinational technological products arrived and targeted the Indian middle-class market (Tarar, 2009). The school contributed with the lithographic illustrations of plans of the city and maps. It also printed lithographed works for private and government sectors. During the late 19th century Urdu language books and catalogues for coins of museum were printed by British Civil and Military Gazette.

The book of *The Indian Museum, 1814-1914* is a source of insight into the colonial interest for the commercial and industry in India which was famous as vegetable kingdom. The book mentioned various products from Bengal presenting the trade and industrial details. It provides the list of products like grains, seeds, fibers silk, oils, medicines, timber and minerals (Museum, 1914). The mass-produced goods captured the markets in India. British factories in the second half of the 19th century had a major impact on the local handmade crafts in the region.

The rural population was dominant and agricultural tools were the largest market economy (Margolin, 2015). The swadeshi (self-reliance) movement emerged in reaction to the British decision to divide Bengal into two parts. The movement boycott the British goods and promoted indigenous products. This movement eventually led to Mahatma Gandhi's campaign in 1920. Gandhi encouraged people to weave Khadi cloth instead of using British cotton. This campaign became a symbol of independence and unity among the people of India (Ibid, 729).

John Lockwood Kipling and George Birdwood were the most significant figures in promoting Indian design and crafts. They emphasized the values of traditional arts to create practical training for artists. They reformed the curriculum by separating fine arts from Indian art to focus local skills and heritage. In the 1930s, chromolithography was introduced and highlighted rich cultural stories and traditions by showcasing colorful prints. The printing and publication expanded and many languages developed typography for reading materials. A wide range of print media was developed for documents, magazines, books and newspapers. In 1907 advanced printing method emerged in the English nationalist literature attracted readership across the country. The illustrations were replaced by the availability of the technology of halftone printing methods. Numerous magazines appeared between 1920-1930 for literature and non-literature. The Times of India launched pictorial magazines in the 1880s, which later became known as the *Illustrated Weekly of India* in 1923. (Ibid, 742-43).

The culture of print media was serving not just visuals for aesthetic for pleasure however, it also reflected the religious and political beliefs of the time. The end of the first World War brought foreign companies to attract middle class customers by manufacturing services and marketing processes in the subcontinent. Among these companies the most significant were the Czech firm Bata, Dunlop Tyers, General Electrics and Philips bulbs.

Kodak introduced cameras for middle class. The advertising campaigns in newspapers and magazines

focused middle class audience (Ibid, 743-44).

The technological inventions contributed to uplift graphic design as a societal profession for the practitioners. Through the lens of the history from manuscripts in Egypt, China and Greece and invention of printing press has made visual communication design an integral part of the late 19th century to the contemporary period. The advertising agencies founded, book publication and magazines emerged to hire art director for designing visual communication to target audience through design content. The term graphic design was coined eventually in 1922 by William A. Dwiggins naming the practices as subject (Meggs, 2020).

Discussion

The study presents how the Industrial Revolution changed communication design through printing press. Many print media types emerged through the printing press during the colonial period. The materials ranged from newspaper to illustrations reproduction, which spread news and information sharing with the broad audience. The Punjab Government Archives hold important specimens of colonial period. It presents how visual communication design developed in the Lahore. The printed specimens include types of typographic styles, wood engravings and illustrations which were used by the newspapers and books to attract readers. The most significant of these is The Illustrated London News used wood engravings and later photography to upgrade visual storytelling about events and happenings in a more descriptive and relatable manner engaging the public.

The growth of printing industry in Lahore changed the access to information and news for the natives. The inclusion of visuals in newspaper provided views and facts about the stories of the events. The development of the technology over the time allowed better reproduction for reproducing the photographs and type styles. This enriched the visual media available to the public. The introduction of Urdu newspapers during the 19th century also reflected changing values in the society. The printing press provided a space for new ideas and cultural exchange by allowing voices to emerge beside foreign influences. Print media by the end of the 19th century was vital in shaping public opinion and political movements in India. The research highlights an overall impact of printing press in the evolution of visual communication design in Lahore beyond and late 19th and early 20th centuries in Indian subcontinent.

Conclusion:

The study explains the substantial influence of Industrial Revolution on communication design in Lahore, predominantly through the development of the printing press. The introduction of print press technologies transformed the media formats for information to broadcast to the public. The research highlighted the printed specimens from the Punjab Government Archives, showcasing the evolution of visual communication from the 19th century to modern times. The printing press made significant influences to Lahore during the colonial period which are still dominant. The development of formats for print media shaped the consumption of information. The research provides a qualitative analysis based upon the specimens of Punjab Government press 1877 retrieved from the Punjab Government Archives. These archives elements provide an insight through a visual catalogue that formed public information.

The East India company established printing in India to initiate various printing documents in London. The press set up in India was launched in the late 18th century to produce English press which eventually inspired the regional printing presses and catered European immigrants. As a result, the local newspapers adopted English styles to communicate Western culture to native population. Newspapers were the mediums providing visual experiences by illustrations, portraits and landscapes to the masses.

The visuals added life and meaning to the text and made the news exciting for mass media communication. The wood engraving process produced affordable copies of information and knowledge through numerous copies of illustrations. The founder of this process was the introduction of *The Illustrated London News* in 1842 setting the trend to present the reality visually in the market. The technological advancement in wood engravings, photoengraving and halftone printing raised the quality of printed materials.

The need for time efficient and cost-effective solutions transformed the printing process.

The development of printing industry in Lahore made the city a centre for newspapers and books publication which impacted the local society. This study highlights that how Industrial Revolution influenced the communication design in Lahore and broader subcontinent. The print press made possible to produce newspapers and books with images and illustrations for the masses to experience the news and culture. The combination of visuals and text set the trend for the mass media communication which provided an access to engage the wide audience by making information more reachable. It helps to foster a cultural shift that laid the foundation of future design practices. The preservation of historical specimens is the source to appreciate the evolution of visual communication design and its impact on the society today.

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