Digital Convergence, Design and Revival of Indian Culture

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Abstract

In recent years because of globalization and urbanization, many Indians are migrating from their hometown and living in different parts across the country and the globe in totally cross cultural and ethnically diverse communities. The Cultural heritage of any community is associated with their daily lifestyle and linked to social, environmental and economic processes. Rituals of 'Sixteen Sacraments of Life' of Indian Vedic culture are considered as intangible cultural heritage. Focus of this paper is on forging a techno-cultural graphic design application to provide culture-centric visual design using digital technology. This Baby-App will help parents and other members of the family to capture the key moments of childhood and the traditional *samskaras* for the child and thus document child's cultural experiences. It will guide young generation of India in cherishing and articulating their child's memories with cultural ethos. Besides documenting a child's cultural experiences, this product will also help in safeguarding our cultural heritage. Revival of cultural mores will also provide opportunities for social and economic development of the individual and society.

Keywords

Graphic Design, New Media Design, Digital Design, Social Media, Digital Photography, Indian Culture, Indology

1. Introduction

The concept of 'Global Village' became very popular in recent years as people are getting connected with each other through electronic and social media. Because of the developments in technology, trade, etc. in the last few decades, people migrated from their original places to other places mainly for the purpose of employment, education, etc. Indian is also affected by this worldwide phenomenon of globalization and urbanization. Immigrants sometimes find themselves in a cross-cultural situation. Social scientists are concerned about the impact of globalization at various levels such as social, psychological, and cultural. The most significant impact seen at the psychological level is the bicultural identity or hybrid identity, the confusion of identity created by the conflict between the native culture and the self-selected or adopted culture. Example of bicultural identity can be a youth who has studied in India and living abroad in an alien culture. Yet he continues to live with his deep-rooted Indian cultural values (R.Nalini, 2012). UNESCO has initiated some measures in safeguarding such heritage and cultures and defined 'tangible' and 'intangible' heritage. Intangible heritage includes oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, etc. It is an invaluable wealth of knowledge transmitted from one generation to the next. Aim of this UNESCO's project is to safeguard heritage and the

challenge is, how the next generation receives this knowledge and puts it into practice (Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2016).

India has diverse cultures with numerous languages, religious traditions, philosophies, arts, cuisines, living traditions, customs, rituals, etc. Religion or the way of living is the thread, which ties everyone together to follow almost similar traditions everywhere. In Vedic culture, sixteen sacraments (samskaras) of life are suggested for an individual from birth to death. These are the milestones in each one's life. Considering the current trends in Indian culture and the future challenges it faces a survey was conducted to collect information from the representative samples of specific cultural group, mainly about their understanding about the culture and meaning of the rituals and customs they follow knowingly or unknowingly. Inductive method was followed in the research study considering the trends in cultural studies. Graphic Design is the branch, which plays an important role in providing culture -centric visual design solution to specific target audience using digital technology. In this research paper an attempt is made to understand the Indian Culture and childhood samskaras and their influence in developing a child's personality by imbibing values and cultural traditions.

The objective of this study is to enrich the design of the existing products with cultural essence and to propose a contemporary media based design as a solution to the techno savvy young generation of India to help them know and practice their culture. Product such as Baby-Book and Baby-App, which are already available in the market, are heavily influenced by the West and lack Indianness in the content. Therefore, they are less popular among the Indians. Designing the Baby-app using digital technology to record post birth cultural memories of a child along with other information for Indian consumers can be a collaborative work and may serve the purpose of revival and safeguarding the culture and building a bridge between society and their culture. Considering Indian society and the role family plays in the development of a child, this application can be used by the other members of the family to help build bridges between the old and new generations of India.

The present paper is divided into five sections. The first section introduces the topic. While the second section offers a critical review of the existing literature on the topic. The third section deals with the contemporary media, digital technology with reference to the web and new media design and technology. In the fourth section, research findings are enumerated. The fifth section while concluding the research findings outlines the researcher's contribution to the present study.

2. Literature Review

The aim of the literature review is to understand various aspects related to cultural studies in the Indian context and the current trends in the communication media and knowing about technocultural products. In this literature review, constructs and variables are identified. (See Table1).

Table 1: Theoretical Framework

Constructs	Variables
Definition	Culture, Cultural Diversity, Cultural Studies, Cultural Industries

Indian Culture	Sixteen Sacraments and Historical Perspective Beliefs and Festivals, Rituals for the new born babies, Childhood memories, cultural values and building the personality of the child Current Trends in Indian Culture and Indian Culture in the 21st Century
Society and current Trends	Role of Family and Society, Extended family and development of the child Current Trends - Urbanization, Globalization, Global Village Young Population in India and the Use of Technology
Challenges	Need to adapt new technologies Practicing tradition Amalgamation of traditional Indian and advanced Culture Communication Media & Technology -Technology, New Media Technology, Print, Digital Media, Social media
Design and Culture	Importance of Communication Design Design and Culture

2.1 Culture and its Various Aspects

Cambridge dictionary has defined culture as a way of life and general customs and beliefs of a particular group and community (Cambridge University Press, 2016). William categorized culture in three different ways. Firstly, culture is a process of human perfection and following of values. Secondly, culture is documenting or recording of intellectual thoughts and cultural experiences in various forms e.g. oral, written, printed etc. so that it will remain alive and preserved. To spread values 'Art' is used as a communication tool, for documentation generates evidences. Thirdly, culture operates in the social sphere in which it is expressed and described in particular ways of living styles, behaviour, etc. Cultural traditions are mutative and change with the times. In course of time during certain stages of evolution of the society, some traditions are weakened and a few others grow and flourish(Williams, 1998, pp. 48-56).

Throsby, who analyzes the meaning of culture, avers that its scope has broadened in the twentieth century from products, and practices of high arts to spiritual and scholarly growth of society. However, culture is sharing of common signs, symbols, text, language, artifact, oral and written traditions by a community or group; it has a functional meaning according to which certain activities are performed together by the community with the help of certain values, intellectual ideas, and the creative and artistic nature of a human being. Throsby further puts forward the view that there is a relation between economics and culture; he observes that when there is a gathering of the group members the symbolic or materialistic goods are exchanged between them. Cultural industries represent and spread culture and help in generating employment. Therefore, the governments plan policy for cultural development (Throsby, 2001, pp. 1-23).

The uniqueness of Indian culture lies in its diversity. According to D.D. Kosambi, two mutually contradictory things in Indian culture "can be seen at the same time", they are its unity and diversity. This contradiction is resolved by "syncretism", hall mark of Indian civilization. India has many languages, scripts, different dietary conventions, climatic differences, sects, and diversity in culture within one state, one district and one city. Kosambi thinks that the culture

followed by intellectual class has spiritual values, which are practiced in religion, philosophy, legal system, literature, art, music, etc. (Kosambi, 2003).

2.2 Intangible Heritage and Cultural Studies

To safeguard heritage UNESCO held a convention in 2003 and identified two types of heritage. They are tangible and intangible heritages. According to UNESCO cultural heritage is not just monuments or just "a collection of objects", it is a tradition passed on from generation to the other. Intangible heritage is a repertoire of "oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts". (What is Intangible Cultural Heritage? 2003).

For Ministry of Art and Culture of India culture means shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices and it plays an important role in promoting the cultural heritage of the country. India possesses intangible heritage in the form of dance, music, songs, ritual, customs, folk traditions, performing arts, paintings and writing. The principal aim of the Ministry is to promote intangible heritage of India (Art & Culture | National Portal of India, 2015).

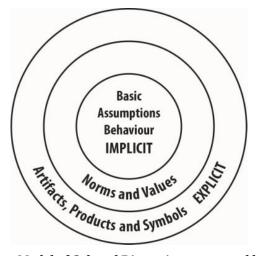


Figure 1: Onion Ring Model of Cultural Dimensions suggested by Hofstede (1980)

Piepenburg discussed the 'Onion Cultural Model' suggested by Hofested. (See Figure 1) Onion cultural model has several internal layers, which are part of every person and society. Piepenburg compiled thoughts of many researchers on culture and its association with society. He concludes that culture is a nurturing factor and its influence on the society can be seen on a larger scale. Piepenburg referred to cultural models suggested by Hofstede. Onion ring model is a very popular model among the social scientists. This model suggests that culture influences the behaviour and values of a person. Outer ring is changeable and it shows what we wear, products and artifacts, sports and leisure activities. It changes according new trends in fashion and technology. It is explicit. External factors can change the outer ring very fast, e.g globalization, environment, etc. Innermost ring is static and harder to change. It does not change according to new trends. Most of the people are not aware of it fully and the meaning is deep and invisible. Therefore, it is called 'Implicit', which means that it need not be understood though inherited. Middle ring of norms and values confines to how we behave in society.—our eating habits, following rules, looking after parents, etc. Children learn basic values at a very early stage. (Piepenburg, 2011)

Nelson et al. suggested that cultural study is a study of national identity, race, ethnicity, popular culture, history of culture, global culture, etc. There is no limit to the subjects which come under purview of cultural studies and many more may be included in future under it. To study the same a researcher need to understand first traditions and lexicons and follow the methodological practices (Nelson, Treichler, & Grossberg, 1992).

2.3 Role of Parents in Introducing Culture to a Child

Results of research conducted by Kurian and Ghosh shows that educated, urban middle-class Indian families started showing more interest in the development of their child because of family or ties of blood relationship. They are interested in maintaining their traditional and cultural identity even though they live abroad. Kurian and Ghosh are interested in knowing whether the second and third generation staying abroad will maintain their distinct cultural identity (Kurian & Ghosh, 1978).

Article on Beinga Parent website focuses on the Indian joint family system and its advantages and disadvantages. While facing challenges of modernization and urbanization Indians still understand the importance of their grandparents and extended families in their life. Grandparents provide emotional security and imbibe values and habits in a child at an early age. This helps in building the personality of the child. Children are raised under such environment of value sharing, and relationships with family (Indian Family System - Boon for a Child, 2015). The parents play a key role in inculcating traditional and cultural values in children; Indiaparenting website provides information about customs and traditions. Number of views for articles reveals that parent take help of such websites to know about traditional information and how to take care of the newborn baby and follow Indian Customs and Traditions (indiaparenting.com, 2014).

Agarwal expressed his thoughts on how to nurture a child using inputs from the cultural traditions; he suggests that throughout a year Hindus celebrate more than a dozen festivals which can be seized upon as on opportunity to introduce various sacred stories and related characters to the children. Contemporary comic books like Amar Chitra Kathaseries and animated electronic versions for the same are available in the market. Sacraments (samskaras), Vedic rituals proposed by sacred textsnamely Smritis and Kalpasutras help in developing the hidden spirituality in the child. (Agarwal, 2006).

2.4 Sixteen Sacraments (Samskaras)- Their History and Modern Relevance

Explaining the meaning of samskaras, Das says that this word is derived from the original Sanskrit word "sanskr" which means 'to put together', 'to form well or make perfect'. Samskaras means, wish good; attract attention; to give information; knowledge, etc. and all is done through rituals. Purpose of samskaras is to prepare a person for a new life and to face challenges. They represent transitional phases in a person's life. They motivate a person through rituals and provide strength. Social system of India is rooted in Indian culture. The popular traditional practices known as sixty-four arts are required for day-to-day life. Many cultural rituals and ceremonies require specific type of accessories made by artisan to create physical environment. Hence, these cultural traditions also creates an opportunity to the craftsman community for channelizing socio-economic development.

This provides stability and secure environment to everyone. Hence, it helps in the growth and economic development of society (Das, 2005, pp. 43-47).

Pandey compiled all definitions of 'Samskaras' from classical Sanskrit literature. Samskaras means "a sense of education; refinement; perfection; polishing; embellishment; decoration and ornamentation; purification rite; a sacred rite or ceremony etc." Samskaras originated in later and post-Vedic period. These sacraments are mostly traditional domestic rites and ceremonies. As the Vedas area primary source of Hindu religion, these traditions and practices related sacraments can be traced back to the Vedic hymns. Description of conception, wedding and death can be found in the hymns of the Rigveda, Samveda, and Atharvanaved. Gautama suggested forty-eight samskaras but the Gruhyasutras, Dharmasutras and Smritis reduced the number and adopted only sixteen main samskaras. Gruhaysutras give detailed information about how to perform various rituals from the time a child is conceived in the womb of mother to the last rites. Further, Pandey suggests that although Samskaras are associated with religion and spirituality they should be looked upon as a means of moral upliftment and ethical life. They guide individual at various stages of growth in life with discipline and purposive channel and help in the formation and development of personality (Pandey, 1969, pp. 1-17, 32).

Gaydhani refers to Vedavyasa Smritiwhich mentions the sixteen samskara as, Garbhadha, Punsavana, Simanttonayana, Jatakarma, Namakaran, Nishkramana, Annaprashana, Karnavedha, Upanayan, Vedarambha, Chaulakarma, Keshanta or Godana. Samavartana. Vivaha. Agniparigrahana and Tretagnisangraha (Gaydhani, 2006).

Soni and Neelam did analytical examination of samskaras from the Ayurvedic perspective. Ayurveda is a traditional system of Indian medicine. Defining Samskaras they use the Sanskrit phrase"Samskaraohi Gunaantradhyanam" which refers to their transforming qualities. Soni and Neelam quoted, "Sanskara reveals that they were aimed at preparing the baby for proper feeding habits, ensuring adequate nutrition, preventing diseases, adapting baby to environment, giving individual identity and educating the child. They take care not only of physical but also mental, social and spiritual development of the child thus making him an individual of good moral fibre, who proves to be an asset to the humanity". Stages of samskaras are connected with the anatomical and physiological development of a child, which is scientifically proved. Further, they suggest that these stages of development of the child should be monitored by the parents, clinicians, and the children must be provided with modern medicinal immunization doses for a healthier life (Gaurava Soni, 2015, pp. 563-571).

Kalavar studied childhood samskaras and contemporary American society. According to Kalavar every samskara is a declaration of a milestone in life with rituals, and traditions. Contemporary Hindu community living either in India or abroad does not practice all suggested samskaras but practices selective and important ones. Childhood samskaras, as they are important milestones with major biological, emotional, intellectual, social influences are brief in nature and can be performed without the help of priest at home or temple or at banquets halls to celebrate special moment. Samskaras are age-specific and the suggested rituals are performed at different ages. The number of immigrants to the USA has increased in the last few years and soalso thenumber of temples to fulfill their cultural needs showsthat people are interested in retaining their cultural heritage in spite of being in an alien land. Parents seem tounderstand the meaning behind the emphasis on samskaras and support ethno-religious identity of the children. (Rituals and Patterns in Children's Lives, 2005).

2.5 Challenges - Indian Culture in the 21st Century and the Current Trends

Bahadur and Dhawan in their research related to social values, parents and family observed that form and function of the family have undergone adaptive changes due to economic and technological development. In modern contemporary urban families, both traditional and modern values are in practice. Because of urbanization, globalization, and influence of Western culture, traditional joint family system is breaking up into nuclear families, which called for a new type of joint family connected emotionally. Observations about nuclear families are; more freedom to children, children stay alone in the house, influenced more by media, poor communication skills, no respect for family members, and no self-discipline. (Bahadur & Dhawan, 2008).

Ramakrishna Mission suggested on how to face the challenge of this modern phase. Mission suggests rejuvenation of Vedic philosophy is possible by bridging the gap between ancient India and modern India through a combination of philosophical schools, amalgamation of sects. Western culture introduced into the modern Indian society rationalism and science, open society with values and social justice. Swami Vivekananda introduced practical Vedanta i.e. application of Vedantic principles in solving the problems of day-to-day life and globalized it through books, lectures, etc. Because of the efforts of the Mission, Vedanta is now a global phenomenon and common property of the mankind.

3.0 Communication Media, Technology and Current Trends

FICCI-KPMG Indian Media and Entertainment Report 2015 reported that digital media had affected print media globally but in India, print industry is still growing and coping with the challenge. Digital media will grow in future and by considering the growth predictions are being made that English print media may lose its market share. Print players have adopted a digital media model to face the challenge by using mobile apps and web portals. Future trend of National and regional print players will be to offer an integrated solution for multimedia platform using internet. Another solution is to adopt a low cost model to survive as suggested by Probal Ghosal, Wholetime Director, Amar Ujala (Print Regional Making Headlines, 2015).

The Economic Times reported that very few people print photographs at their local photo studios; they are mainly wedding and special events. Local photo studios adapted a new trend of digital photography and technology to print photographs from CD, USB drive, memory cards, mobile phones, etc. (Bhagat, 2010).

Current trend in photo printing technology is Vistaprint. India has launched a new business in Indian market in which client can book online their printing order, e.g. photo book and it will delivered to them in 9 working days. Using downloaded editor client can create a photobook upto 120 pages with extra backgrounds and layouts if necessary. One can begin with empty photo book and add photos in this convenient online tool (Custom Photo Albums, 2016).

Press released published by Tata Consultancy, a leading company in IT services and consultancy provider reports that there is an increase in the use of digital gadgets among the youth. A result of 'GenY study survey shows theextensive use of various gadgets like mobile phone, tablet, MP3 players, laptops, gaming consoles and computers. Home PC is the least favorite gadget across India and the mobile phone is the most favorite gadget. 72% use smart phones to access internet and social networking sites instead home computer. Facebook is the most preferred social networking tool used by 75.73% national average. 25.68% students post

more than 3 times a week, 56% claim that social media helped them in keeping up-to-date with current affairs and increased the rate of knowledge distribution.

Social networking sites are often used for writing posts; chatting; posting photos; ecommerce; learning through Wikipedia, downloading PDFs, and online videos; reading news, and to connect with family and friends. Most preferred means of communication for Social media platforms are Whatsapp and Viber and they have replaced SMS, email and conventional chats. Top three career options in India are IT (36.58%), Engineering (20.24%), and Media and Entertainment (9.85%). Youth in metros showed 12.43% in Media and Entertainment career (Youth Survey 2014, 2014).

3.1 Design, Digital Media and User Centric Applications

Cultural Studies is one among the many subjects taught worldwide at various design institutes. In this ethnographic study, various research methods in vogue in the field of cultural studies are used to carry out the research. These methods help in capturing the information about the cultural processes, meanings and practices. Cultural study is an inter-disciplinary field (Cultural Studies, 2016). Design is a creative problem solving process and new designers follow homocentric approach to design artifacts. Recently, graphic designers have evolved as 'User Interface Designers' and 'User Experience Designers' and have been working as hybrid designers to solve the social and technological problems of the 21st Century. These processes involve research, interaction and visual design (LaBarre, 2016). A recent trend noticed all over the world is the use of digital technology in preserving the cultural properties of the humankind such as architecture, sociology, history, art, etc. Digital technology is used by integrating two major areas such as knowledge management and implementation of technology. Public understanding and knowledge management helps in sustaining the cultural properties and heritage (Ioannides, Magnenat-Thalmann, Fink, Zarnic, Yen, & Quak, 2014). Digital design strategy is a combination of multiple cross discipline skills, which involves content creation, user interface design, user experience design, web development, and marketing. Goals are achieved by the process driven by guidelines (Tim Frick, 2014).

The following factors have circumscribed the present study:

- There is a dearth of literature, which focuses critically on the effects of globalization and industrialization on the Indian society in the context of the cultural model suggested by Hofstede. As the model compliments the innermost-implicit ring related to the basic assumptions and behaviour of the Indians and the outermost-explicit ring dealing with the artifacts, products and symbols in the context with 'Sixteen Vedic Sacraments'.
- There is a shortage of sufficient literature available on the 'Sixteen Vedic Sacraments' and their connectivity and importance with reference to art and artisan. Most of the authors have associated them with spirituality.
- Literature in the context of the 'Sixteen Vedic Sacraments' and their application using new media technology especially in the area of mobile app is not available.
- There is a lack of case studies focusing on the 'Sixteen Vedic Sacraments' and using digital application for revival and preservation of the Indian culture.

Research Findings 4.0

Competitor study was conducted to know the scope of the project. All are an indirect competitors that mean that no mobile application is available to Indian customer with reference to the cultural context. Common Features available in the existing BabyApp are:

- Documentation and recordings of babies key moments and better parenting
- Used by parents, grandparents and other family members
- Tracking sleep, feeding, growth, immunization, etc. of the baby
- Maintenance of the baby's medical record
- Summary of babies daily activities
- Child's new favourite things or quotes
- Timeline view, my birth, my first year, my world etc.
- Sharing on multiple devices such as mobile, tablet, pc, etc.
- email function to share babies records
- View as slideshow, album, e-book or print book

Data Analysis of Survey 4.1

Information is collected from the parents of young children residing in the metros and are in the age group 27 to 41. All the parents are educated and are from middle-income group. Percentage of gender among the sample selected is 25% male and 75% female. Academic qualifications of sample are 3% diploma holder, 41% graduates, 53% postgraduates and 3% PhD holders. 19% of sample size is aware of 'Sixteen Vedic Sacrament' in Indian culture and 81% is not fully aware of them. They are aware of 3 to 9samskaras. 49% of sample size came to know about samskaras from their parents, 36% from family members, 7% from friends and neighbours, 6% from books and 2% from internet. 97% are interested in preserving and continuing of cultural heritage.

Opinion about 'Sixteen Vedic Samskaras: 87 % believe that it has some spiritual and scientific meaning so we should continue them while 81% agreed upon that it is a reason to socialize and maintain relations with family and friends. According to 66% samskaras helps in the formation and development of a child's personality and 78% opine that it helps in the development of social, behavioural and economic growth of the society.

88% of sample size wants next generation also should carry forward these samskaras.

While stating about childhood memories, 56% of young parents have documented evidences of childhood samskaras performed for them in the form of photographs. Expectedly, 100% are interested in documenting their child's memories related to cultural events.

91% young parents record their child's memories in various forms — 53% in digital photographs, 42% videos, 2% scrapbook and 3% BabyBook. 50% of the young parents arefor the BabyBook, which is a Western concept. 100% would appreciate to see Indian cultural events in BabyBooks, which currently are missing in them.

16% use print media to print photographs regularly and 59% rarely print photographs and 16% do not print photographs atall.

All young parents from this survey are smart phone users and all i.e. 100% agreed that they are very much interested to use mobile application to document their child's memories related to culture. To rewind the memories they wish to use mobile, TV, PC, printed books, etc.

5. Conclusion

Survey results show that although the contemporary Indian society is affected by the globalization, large-scale industrialization, etc. the core values of the young parents remain un affected. Although many of them do not have much knowledge about the Sixteen Vedic Samskaras, they are still interested in continuing them as part of their cultural heritage. These traditions are passed on from generation to generation. The survey results reveal that young parents know about rituals and customs mainly from their parents and other family members. They believe that since sixteen Vedic samskaras have some spiritual and scientific meaning, they need to be preserved. There is awareness among them that Samskaras are also a means to socialize and maintain relations with family and friends. Hence, they are a means to form and develop a child's personality.

The survey reveals that almost half the sample size seems to be familiar with the BabyBook, though it is not very popular in India. The most probable reason behind this could be that BabyBooks available in the Indian market lack the essence of Indian culture; nevertheless, Indian parents do wish to have their culture related aspects in the BabyBook. Another possible reason for not using BabyBook can be linked to the extensive use of digital photography and people are not much interested in printing photographs for various reasons, e.g. storage place for photo albums, escalating printing charges, etc.

Apart from the above observations, it is found that the young parents are very much keen on documenting the cultural memories of their child. Though there are many websites available in India for better parenting, Baby Applications, especially for Indian parents, are hardly available.

While proposing a solution to revive and preserve Indian culture, one must consider the use of contemporary tools and technology. The cultural model suggested by Hofstede, 'Outer Ring' is explicit, and is about artifacts, symbols, etc., which can easily be affected by influential external factors such as contemporary trends, technology, globalization, etc. Current communication trend of the social media is the use of internet and smart phones. The proposed design solution fulfills the need to revive an Indian culture through BabyApp mobile application. This mobile application will have features like (1) capturing and documenting key moments of child's life; (2) providing medical assistance/ guidance and growth tracking;(3) also tracking babies' culture related memories; (4) providing brief information about the samskaras and when and how they are performed; (5) alerting user by notifications; (6) considering the diversity of Indian culture, and making provision for the user to add extra festivals and other rituals to it.

Synchronization between multiple devices namely, mobile, tablet, PC, etc. is suggested. Captured data can be compiled and saved in various file formats, which can be projected on various screen e.g. Mobile, Tablet, TV, Computer screen, PDF format for printing and can be shared with individual persons or within a group.

This study proposes that by combining digital technology, design studies and cultural studies, a designer can influence contemporary Indian society for the revival and reconstruction of intangible cultural heritage. Graphic designers should look at such projects as a new design opportunity with cultural perspective. Considering the new technological and social networking trends, these designing practices can play an important role in promoting Indian culture creatively, and will help in the sustainable social and economic development of individual and society.

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