

HOUSE ON WHEELS

PERSONALISATION OF VEHICLES

by:

CHARUTA BOBADE ✓

under:

PROF. UDAY ATHAVANKAR.

SPECIAL PROJECT



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APPROVAL SHEET:

The Product Design, Special Project entitled 'PERSONALISATION OF VEHICLES' by Charuta Bobade is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Master of Design degree in Industrial Design.

Guide : *W. S. Patil*

Internal examiner : *A. S. Patil*

Internal examiner :

personalisation of vehicles

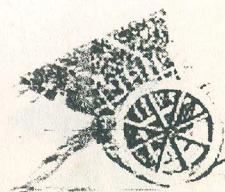


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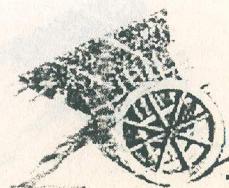
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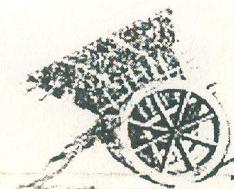
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1. INTRODUCTION:

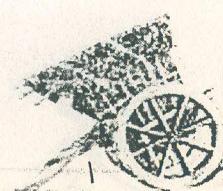


In olden days Palakis or Menas which are structures carried on shoulders by slaves were a popular means of transport. Other means of travelling were riding on tamed animals like elephants horses ,donkeys and camels. Then the carriages were combined with animals to form bullock carts or horse carts. Let the transportation be of any kind the owner used to make it himself or under his supervision. Right from saddles on horses to cushions and curtains in Palakis every thing had personal touch of the individual using the vehicle.(fig. no. 1) Sometimes these decorations were used to add aesthetic value to these vehicles to the extent of making them a piece of art, but without subduing their functional value.

1.1 Why personalisation?



Personalisation is a psychological need for human beings .If there had been natural difference in the looks of person showing his educational , economical status in the society the need for personalisation would not have been there. This need for personalisation is specifically observed on objects used by human beings. We like to create our own environment around us. In today's time of 'mass manufacturing' we have to add our own touch to the things we buy, to give them sense of belonging. This gives scope to our creativity and adds colours to our lives. This gives identity to the product. Thus anything we buy , may be a bag or a house or even a car we like to add our personal touch to it. While doing this value addition , we might borrow ideas from elsewhere. thus we find lots of car accessories to be direct derivatives of house accessories.



1.2 How are the cars personified? (study of criteria) :

This article explains how people in India personalise their cars. How do people select these accessories? What do they aspire? The study is governed by three criteria being,

- i. car as an extension of home,
- ii. cars reflecting family status,
- iii. accessories revealing age groups of the influencing people.

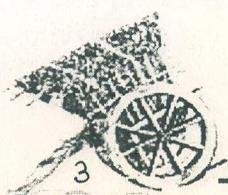
The semi-private vehicles like auto-rikshaw, taxis, trucks, private buses are not considered since they have very wide scope for personalisation. This is because their body building over the chassis is a separate business all together. Also the vehicles belonging to private firms, companies or institutes are not considered since the identity of the respective firm has dominance over the touch of the driver.

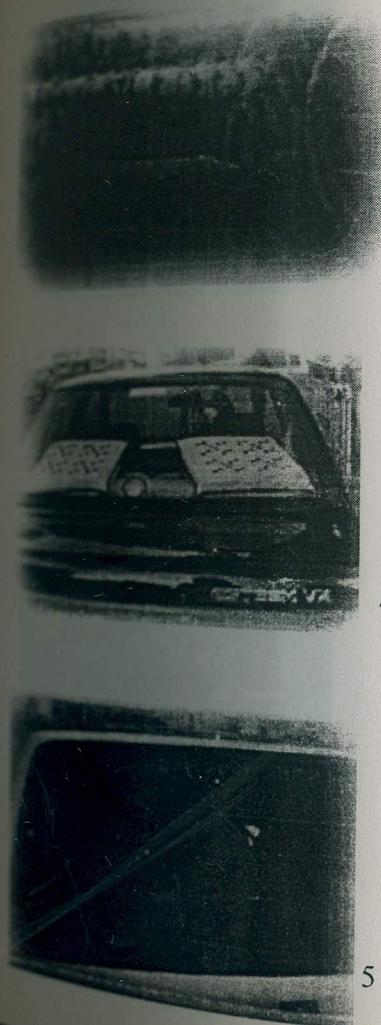


2.COMMONALITIES IN PERSONIFICATION OF HOUSE AND CAR:

Its observed that the initial investment is done in cars as in houses by taking loans. Thus at least in case of 50 percent of people the funding remaining is very less for buying accessories or furniture and other house hold appliances. In case of cars the security accessories get priority. They can be bumper guards , indicator and head lamp guards , anti-theft locks etc. Similarly at houses grills , hand latches , burglars alarms get priority over all other things. Then is the consideration for other house hold appliances or decoration. In cars upholstery covers , curtains, hangings, wheel capes and other aesthetics influencing accessories get secondary importance. This is usually seen with the people from middle class back ground , while rich people can afford to think about buying everything at a time. Due to this fact the accessories bought by the rich people can match with the car interiors and with each other. Where as middle class people buy it all separately with time gaps and they usually do not go with each other. Also for rich people car is like a show case with glasses from all four sides to exhibit their wealth. The knickknacks or aesthetic dominating accessories are usually bought with the influence of family members may be wife, children , grand parents or also by chauffeur.

Lets first peep inside the car to find correlation in the way we personify our houses and our cars. We appear to consider car as temporary shelter . To have a sense of continuity of comfort wherever we go. We must be adding features to car to give it homely touch.





2.1 Seat covers:

The seats of car get treatment of sofa at house. Selection of both the things i. e. the casing of upholstery and sofa involves likings and dislikings of the whole of the family and especially the wife. The inside looks of the car can be changed by changing the covers without much spending. In the selection of upholstery options provided by the company are fewer but seat covers have wider variety for selection. Usually seat covers are used to lessen the body contact with the artificially manufactured seats, as if we try to reduce the effect of 'manufacturedness' of the car. The seat covers make us feel comfortable or at ease. Lots of variety is available in these seat covers. The furry and leathered versions give executive looks. While the intellectuals of society choose descent greys. The lower income group running semi-private vehicles like bright colours like red, yellow and orange. This is found in correlation with the colours at their houses. Square shaped, neatly embroidered cushions on the seats of car actually eat up the space inside the car. But since they are used on beds or sofas of drawing rooms, they very conveniently occur inside the cars also! (fig. no.4) Sometimes even the dash board is given cover as we have a table clothe which serves the function of aesthetics. (fig.no.3)

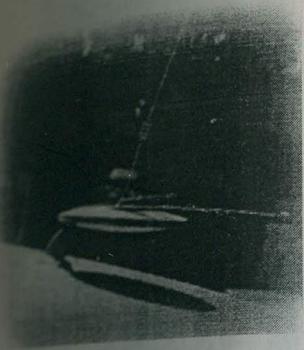
2.2 Curtains:

Curtains provide privacy and protect the inmates from sun and dust. Here again the curtains in car remind us of the curtains in dressing room. The patterns and the colours used on the curtains are similar. Some of us put them to get royal looks to the interiors of car. At some places the curtains are made up of the lila-lace material with lots of frills. Actually the material is so transparent that it hardly serves the purpose of privacy but we like to use it since the material is related to aristocracy. There are certain modifications done in actual curtains to suit to the cars. The vaccum suckers are provided to remove these flappes during nights (fig. no. 5)

2.3 Reading lamps:

Reading lamp in the bed room with flexible necks are transplanted in vehicles with certain changes. Though medical advice is given not to read during travelling, these lamps add to the facilities provided inside the car. That might be one of the features making us feel 'homely' in a car.

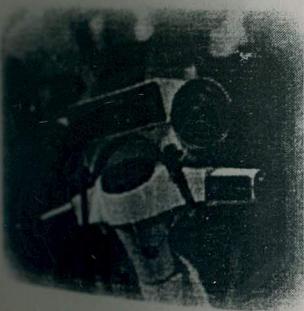




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2.4 Hangings:

We decorate the houses by putting wall hangings. Their derivatives are found in the cars hanging from the rear view mirrors. They can be in the form of stuffed toys which show their origins in western culture. Usually the choice of this toy is done by the youngest person in the family. Some of them are like puppets or dolls which specifically look Indian. As we have pot hangings having real live plants into them at houses, we find similar hangings with artificial flowers in the pot hangings. This shows how the accessories at home have changed themselves considering the limitations in car. Also gajaras with fragrant flowers are hung from the rear view mirrors especially by the chauffeurs in chauffeur driven vehicles. Though these are perishable they are everyday replaced by the drivers. We also see a stuffed furry monkey clinging to the inside of rear glass. Its long tail is usually subject of entertainment for the 'rearmates' of the car. All these hangings don't have any functional value. Plenty of times driver gets distracted due to these ever dancing hangings, but still they are never removed from their places.



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2.5 No accessories:

Few of us do not like any kind of accessories to be fitted on their vehicles. They believe in simplicity and the functionality more than other adornments. These people maintain their vehicles in the best condition. They do not mind spending very high price for the maintenance but would not spend on the accessories.

2.6 Antennae:

Now, in all cities and towns we see thick concrete jungle with television antennae probing out of them. Similarly, cars have radio ariel.(fig. no.6) Some cars also have small television sets inside a car. But music system happens to be the most common amongst them. We travel for comparatively very short time of the day by the car, but still we like to have all luxuries into it. The purpose of having music system in a car can vary from real entertainment to mere show of its existence. Few auto rikshaws also have music systems. Both volume of the music and its choice reminds us of the recent marriage occasion in nearest hutment. Now the music system has also being designed specifically for two wheelers (fig. no.7). This seems to be very dangerous accessory but people might buy it out of craze. Everything we put-on or add-on reveals our behaviour and life style. Along with music system some can have a miniature rack for cassettes. Attached to same moulding comes a glass holder. Thus, we can drink a cold drink sip by sip as we do while seating in a restaurant. Plenty of cars manufactured in developed countries have seats with in built moulded glass holders. This tells us that accessories which are new now become permanent features of vehicles later.



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2.7 Air cooling:

Air conditioners, air coolers and fans bring comfort inside a house. Why should not they be used to serve the same function in cars? Sometimes also a carpet of grass called as 'wala' is used on roof of cars. If moistened this keeps the car cool. This 'wala' carpet is used as curtains of windows in case of houses.

2.8 Air fresheners:

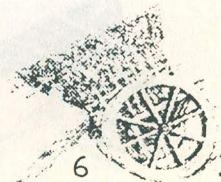
Air fresheners and fragrant scents used in dressing rooms have come to cars. This has got forced function in cars. Till recently car owner were not aware of the bad smell inside the car due to its moistened upholstery and mats. But when they see the perfume, air freshener bottles on dash board of their neighbours' car they suddenly become aware of this bad smell. And the following day their car is equipped with the costlier version of fragrant air freshener. (fig. no. 8) Like wise there are plenty of car accessories which have less functional significance. They are merely 'knickknacks' decorating dash boards.

2.9 Clocks:

No room of our home is complete without a time piece. Thus we see these clocks with digital LCD displays on dash boards. Here also the clocks with gold plating and rich looks are available for the upper class of society. (fig. no. 9)

2.10 Tinted glasses:

The glass panes of cars are usually tinted to protect the inmates of the car from sun. They also add privacy to the interior of the car. Lots of different visual textures are observed in these tinted glasses. (fig. no. 10) Here, the borrowing seems to be reversed its roll with car.



2.11 Accessories related to faith and superstitions:

Indian people have deep faith in the God. We find small icons at our homes which are worshipped everyday. Its extension in cars is also existing. Almost every car either has an icon, a sticker even a small temple on the dash board. The photographs at home are transformed into stickers (fig. no. 12) since holding of photographs otherwise will become difficult. The small icons of temples also have LCD lights connected to the battery of car to be lit at night. Especially in chauffeur driven cars this God is worshipped everyday. Fragrant sticks are lit and fresh flowers are offered to the God. The driving involves lots of risk. The presence of the icon must be psychologically supporting them. They must be getting a feeling of the god accompanying them everywhere and all the time!

Few of the drivers are superstitious to the extent that they attempt to ward off danger by several devices to protect them from ill wills. The symbols such as black cotton doll, lemon with chillies in a string or foot wear miniature (fig. no. 11) are not uncommon. This tradition is quite old. We have already seen such symbols on front doors of our houses.

Opposite to such negative work sometimes auspicious symbols are added to vehicle to bring them good luck and prosperity. Garlands are put on the vehicles on no moon days or full moon days depending on the beliefs. A garland put on houses declare the religiousness, happiness and to indicate auspicious events. Similar functions are served by the garlands of the vehicles.

Special decoration of the car:

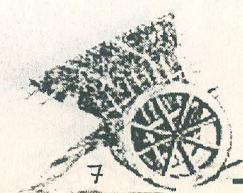
During special occasions like marriages everybody at house is decked up and so is the house. Lots of garlands are put and lighting is done on the house and it looks glamorous. Same is the case with vehicle. The car taking the bride to her new house is decorated with fresh flowers. It looks as if the car is wearing a gown of flowers to attend the ceremony. It carries the message of 'just married' on it.



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2.12 Anti-theft alarms:

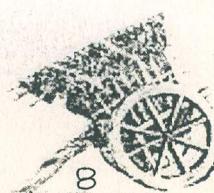
As we lock our houses while going out, similarly the car is also locked. In addition to it anti-theft alarm is used on cars to keep further control. This can be the extension of burglar alarms for homes. It is a security guard for the vehicle.

2.13 Number plates:

Number plate acts as an identity of vehicle. Identity card of person or address of a house serve same function. Numbers to the vehicle are given by the R.T.O. and can not be selected by the customer. But still few of us being insistent about particular number. They can wait for any amount of time to get the numbers they are obsessed with. This can come just out of whim or some kind of superstition like the particular number being lucky. The number plates give lots of scope for the art to be displayed. The font, type, size, shape of number plates along with the colourful graphics around the number is entirely left to owners' choice. Here again we can see a nice blend of function with aesthetics.

2.14 Graphics on vehicle:

Occasionally the vehicle may carry some name as we name our houses (fig. no. 13). These names could belong to the owners or his children's or could evolve just out of liking. These names could be painted or in the form of stickers. Along with these names other slogans are also observed especially on semi-private vehicles. Some vehicles carry graphics. Rally cars, race cars usually have bold and gaudy graphics. Some sport lovers from us can even colour the cars on similar lines. Other type of graphics observed are often advertisements of auto-companies, service stations, garages or even other organisations. They are usually in the form of stickers. Plenty of people do not desire to have these non aesthetic elements on their vehicles. Not every body likes their cars pasted with stickers similar to compound walls. Few stickers like the ones put after pollution testing can even be functional. Doctor's red plus gives pride to the owner and relief to the people on the road in case of emergency. It's a graphics based on profession and can act like an advertisement. Red 'L' makes others alert telling them that the driver is a learner and extra precautions to be taken while being near to that vehicle. Actually plenty of young learners usually do not like to display that they are still amateur drivers. But due to the traffic rules they have to use it. On the other hand few adults being over protective put the 'L' mark just to be on the safer side.



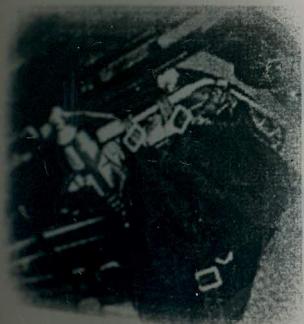
2.15 Carriers:

Carriers and dikis in the cars or two wheelers are functional accessories providing additional facility for carrying luggage. the luggage should not encroach in the area of passenger. The carrier on the roof of vehicle must have been derived from concept of a loft in houses. Diki is like cupboard. Due to the carrier on roof air drag on vehicle increases at high speeds(fig.no.13). Some very different versions of carriers are observed in two wheelers. The accessory clarifies the user group. This is an example where in a canvas bag serves the same purpose. It gives casual looks to the vehicle.(fig. no.14)

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3. ACCESSORIES INDEPENDENT OF HOUSE ACCESSORIES:

There are certain accessories of cars which seem to be independent and not derivatives of house accessories. Wheel caps, various safety guards, rear view mirrors, rubbing strips are few of them.

3.1 Wheel caps:

The wheel caps seemed to be used to reduce the air drag at high speeds. But in India the speed is never so high. Thus wheel caps have only aesthetic function. There are few trims which suggest motion of wheels. They can be chromplated injection moulded polypropylene, stainless steel, or aluminium. They change looks of the car to great extent. Usually the selection of wheel caps is done by the younger generation of the family. Lots of variety is observed in wheel caps. Few look like wheels of ratha. Few give appearance of spoked wheels which tell relationship with vintage cars. If the wheel caps are made up of non reflective material then they seem to add weight to the vehicle visually. In general wheel caps play major role in visual appearance of vehicle.

3.2 Rear view mirrors:

Rear view mirrors are also functionally specific to the cars. Out of the two versions one is inside the car and the other is outside the car. New variety of inside rear view mirror has two concave mirrors; one giving the outside rear view and the other giving glimpse of person seating behind. This can help the driver to even look at the rear mate while talking to him without actually turning. In few government vehicles the rear view mirrors are put on the front bonnets (fig. no. 15). They can not be adjusted by the drivers while seating in side the vehicle to catch the rear view. They must be used to show the relationship with royal vehicles of kings of olden days. But the most effective use of these rear view mirrors is done by the youngsters to watch interesting crowd around and to maintain their hair styles.



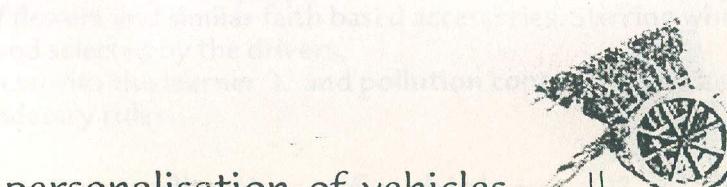
3.3 Rubbing strips:

Rubbing strips on side of the car just above wheel arches avoid scratches to the car in case of kiss and go kind of accidents. The paint is protected from getting damaged. These strips separate the vehicle visually into two parts. Since this has resemblance to structural members visually it adds to the strength of the vehicle. The material can be stainless steel or even rubber. This makes the vehicle slightly sporty.

3.4 Air spoilers:

Air spoilers on the rear of the vehicle reduce the air drag at very high speeds. But in India we never get to drive at such a high speeds. Thus air spoilers act as a strong visual feature making the vehicle sporty. (fig. no.16)

Now lets consider the other criteria of studying accessories of a car.



4.ROLE OF DIFFERENT MEMBERS OF FAMILY IN SELECTION OF ACCESSORIES:

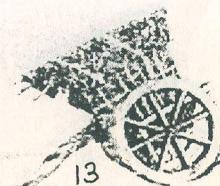
This aspect has been discussed with respect to each accessory separately. But this paragraph gives further overview of influence of different members of family in the act of selecting an accessory for a car.

Usually in India the car is referred to as a family vehicle while a two wheeler can even belong to a single person. Due to this shared feeling with car everybody wants to give his or her touch to the vehicle to show their belongingness to the car. Thus everybody adds to the vehicle as per his liking. We observe lots of misco-ordination of accessories due to this fact. Following are the few observations regarding same:

- 1) Upholstery covers , curtains , cushions are the typical house related accessories which are selected by the woman of the house. Other cosmetic accessories like perfume bottles , tissue paper holders are also biased by the woman's liking.
- 2) The toys and hangings in the car are usually acquired by considering the liking of the youngest member of the family. Furry soft toys taking shapes of teddy bear , Donald duck are desired by kids. The sound making toys make the kids giggle.
- 3) Grand parents or the older generation insist about having an icon of the God in the vehicle.
- 4) Youths or college going family members are over enthusiastic and like all sporty and rugged accessories. They will like a air spoiler to the vehicle. The ariel coming out will make the vehicle look more hi-take thus is desired by them. They always wish to be different from others and like to be noticed. Thus they put jazzy graphics on the vehicle. Reflective stickers are also liked by them. The wheel caps are movement suggestive. Even key chain selected by them suggests element of surprise.
- 5) Earning members or owner of car selects functional accessories for the vehicle. These accessories are purely functional like carriers, alarms, air conditioners and fans. Also these accessories require comparatively higher investments. These accessories involve maintenance and thus the maintenance. So the decision taker has to be the earning member.
- 6) Chauffeur driven cars have added things by chauffeur. These can be like Gajaras, fragrant sticks , garland of flowers and similar faith based accessories. Stirring wheel covers are usually demanded and selected by the drivers.
- 7) Besides all these accessories the learner 'L' and pollution control testing certificates are selected due to mandatory rules.

5. ACCESSORIES BIASED DUE TO SOCIAL STATUS IN SOCIETY:

There is social difference in people staying in rural and urban areas. Urbanised people get more exposure to western world. Thus the accessories having influence of western culture like hangings, toys, perfume bottles are usually seen in their cars. The status conscious people and sophisticated people buy accessories which are very costly and comparatively having less functional value. Generally the rich people having rural back ground also think about the functionality of the accessory before buying it. They like to evaluate the price of product against its durability and usability.



6. CONCLUSION:

It is very clear from the above study that personalisation is inseparable part of human life. The different ways adopted by people to personalisation makes their lives more interesting to live with. Lots of variety is observed in this personalisation which makes the study also very interesting. The needs based on human nature, interests, likings and the psychology can be very well stated by studying the personalisation methods adopted by them.

Especially for designers this study gives directions to work on any product may it be textile design, graphic design, consumer product design or even architecture. While generalising the whole of group of people can be divided on basis of economical status, age groups, geographical regions, sex or even professions. Then their characteristics can be known from their behaviour. In this conventional way of studying human behaviour the need of his personal expression should also be considered. Thus study of personalisation is very essential from point of view of designer.

Car is selected to study the personalisation due to the fact that we are closely associated emotionally with our vehicles. Actual tailor-made vehicle would have been liked by everybody but that is not possible in this time of mass manufacturing. So we give personal touch to them as per our liking to give them identity. The other appliances we buy like music systems or may be cupboards which are generally of not very personal use. They are shared by other family members. Thus the individual attachment is less. Also these products are kept at home and visually, are not accessible to the whole of world unlike cars. The other subject for study of personalisation can be 'home'.

The criteria for evaluation of personalisation are based on age groups and social status and aspirations in society. This really helped to carry out the study.

