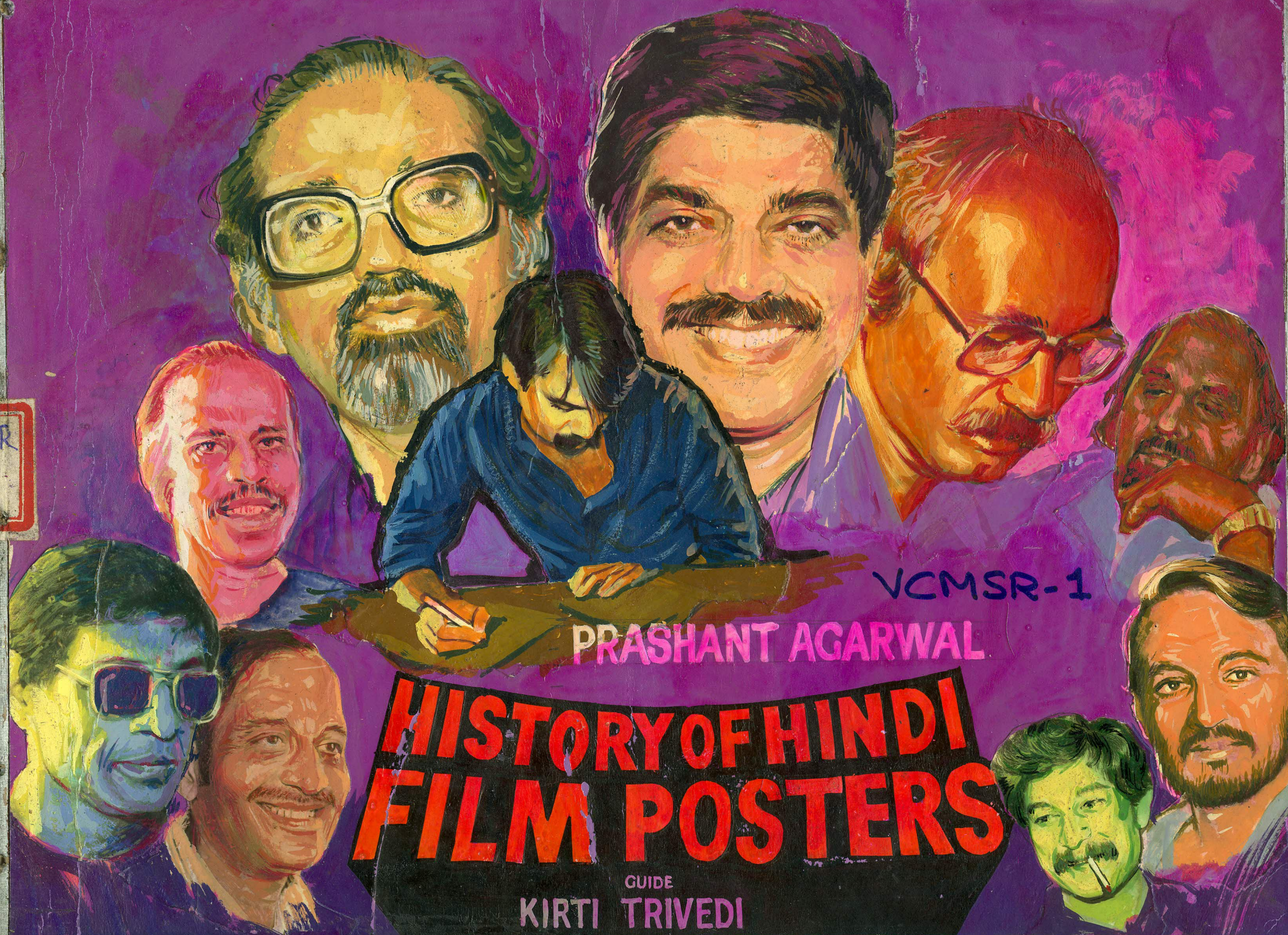


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VCMSR-1

PRASHANT AGARWAL

HISTORY OF HINDI FILM POSTERS

GUIDE
KIRTI TRIVEDI

VCMSR-1 (3/8)

I. D. C. Library
L. I. T. Bombay.

Project 1 (Seminar)

HISTORY OF HINDI FILM POSTERS

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My thanks to my father, Shri Satishchandra Agarwal for the visual material and for his knowledge of the film advertising field of the last forty five years.

Prashant Agarwal

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INTRODUCTION

Films have entertained Indians for the last eighty years. They have been the easiest and the cheapest form of entertainment available for the masses of India. The film medium is an Industry by itself. One of the largest industries of India.

A lot has been written about the Indian film Industry. Its vastness, the number of films made and the variety. People have written about the producers the directors, the actors and the technicians. They have explored the history of films since their inception in the early part of the century. But no one has ever given a thought to the media and the people who helped to advertise and publicise these films. Those people who blew up these film personalities into super heroes. Presenting the films in a highly glamourised form.

These people who never reached the limelight of the film industry and worked lifelong in the forgotten corners are the people who through their art brought the film to the masses.

No one ever tried to find out how these people worked what they did and what has their contribution been to the film industry. This project is an effort to study a part of the film advertising. To probe into the history of hindi film posters and to find out the design changes and trends through the years.

EARLY HISTORY OF FILM ADVERTISING

Introduction of films in India was announced by the lumiere brothers with an asvertisement in the times of India of 7th July 1896. This was an unusual advertisement. It showed people sitting in a theatre and enjoying a film. This was the starting point of films in India. Although full lenght films were not made untill the twenties many short films were made and were haavily advertised. The medium being new soon became a rage. For the huge Indian masses to see a moving picture was like a miracle ..

During the early part of the century films were made mostly by a few individuals with studios of their own. These people hired a few artists of their own and kept an in-house art department. They produced their own art works and the name of the artists were rarely known. Thus most of the artists of the early period remained relatively unknown. Later on the work of making the designs was taken up by some individuals and they started putting their names on the artworks.

The main mediumd of advertising at that time were the newspapers and the posters. The hoardings were also used. Since there was nothing like commercial art in those times the people working were mostly fine artists. This made most of the work of that time to be with a predominant influence of western fine art.

Varied were the mediums of advertising used in those times. the mediums were used according to the place and n. need. They were as foliows:

- 1) Newspapers and Magazines.
- 2) Posters
- 3) Hoardings
- 4) Human bill board
- 5) Bullock cart with posters.
- 6) Street criers
- 7) Elephant posters
- 8) Handbills
- 9) Booklets
- 10) Radio advertising

Now today with the advent of television the amount of Radio advertising has decreased.

POSTERS

Posters were mainly printed on cheap paper. During the early phase since four color printing was very expensive because it was not very easily available in India, it had to be got done from abroad. At this time only two color printing was done. The colors used were either red and blue and red and black. These posters were then distributed all over the country. They were put up on walls, street light poles and were pasted on to boards and carried on a hand cart or a bullock cart.

posters were mainly, during the artwork phase, hand painted unlike today when the photographic processes have overtaken the illustrators.



LEAFLETS AND BOOKLETS

These leaflets and booklets were usually distributed at the main theatre. The leaflet was a small paper which gave information of when the film was releasing and who were the characters of the film.

The booklets gave a synopsis of the story and all the lyrics of the film. This booklet was usually sold for a nominal fee.



VAN DECORATION

An unusual form of advertising in those times was the van decoration. Any van or car was covered on three sides with hoardings. These hoardings were of plywood and were fixed to the van. This van then drove around the city and stopped at the street corners so that people could have a good look at the hoardings on the van. Many a times the van also carried a loud speaker and at every street corner proceeded to give a speech about the film its characters and its technicians. These vans were very popular in those days but today this medium has almost stopped due to petrol expense and van maintenance.



HOARDINGS

Hoardings were huge banners made of either canvas, plywood or tin. They were made in oilpaints and were in sizes ranging from 12x8 to 20x10 and larger, They were usually put up at street sites and at the theatres. The people who made them were specialists only in this medium.

This was a very difficult medium to make and the artists spent almost six to ten years to learn how to paint in such a abnormal size. Since no school existed which taught this style of painting people learnt by becoming apprentices of the existing masters.



STREET CRIERS

These were also known as human bill boards. They carried two posters, one on the front of their bodies and on at the back, like a sandwich. They walked through the streets shouting out the details of the film. The posters they carried were not always the printed poster but a specially painted poster which gave information about where the film was to be screened etc.

IMPACT OF FILM ADVERTISING

Our society has always been a restrictive society. Not allowing the members to indulge in anything that is not a part of our cultural heritage. When films were introduced the reaction was to avoid them. Only the rich and educated people went to see these films.

But the glamour of films was not easy to ignore. The people in the cities were the first ones to flock the theatres. But since women were supposed to stay at home and not indulge in any vulgar activities they did not go to see the films. Women were not even allowed to act in films. When films were made by the Indians themselves and the subjects of the films became mythological then only did women venture into the theatres.

Film advertising had a great impact on our society. For the masses who had never seen anything like it before it was a revelation. After the initial fear of films was over the masses revelled in studying the advertising most minutely. It became such a craze that people used to go specially to the advertising and the hoardings of the films. The impact was such that people started believing in what they saw. It was a common sight to see people praying in the theatre during a mythological film. Films became such a great success that people almost forgot the other forms of entertainment. This was due to the advertising of the films.

NEW TECHNOLOGY

The quality of printing did a lot to the design of the posters. People took into consideration that if a poster was to be printed by a particular method then the design too should be compatible to it. This made a great difference to the end product.

In the early twenties color printing was not available easily and then too it was very expensive. Thus this period saw mostly twocolor printing. The designs too were prepared in two colors. During this period magazines were printed in color but only the cover page. The color separation was done by hand and this was very expensive. But during the forties color printing was introduced by many people and most of the posters were printed in full color. Litho offset was the common method of printing. The change in the printing method brought in a new class of designers or artists. People with a knowledge of printing, and many fine artists.

Similar was the case of photography. Color photography was introduced in late forties and changed the poster drastically. Now the artist gave better colors and used color photographs for his illustrations.

TYPES OF POSTERS

There are basically four types of posters.

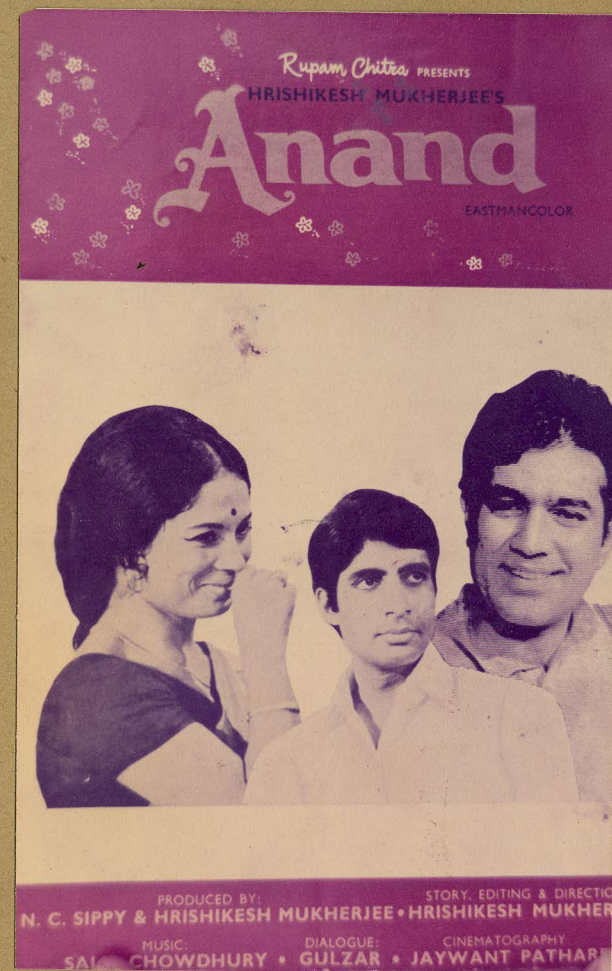
- 1) the illustrative poster
- 2) The objective informative poster
- 3) the constructive poster
- 4) the experimental poster

Any poster has many functions according to its task. It should inform, simulate, motivate, and convince. The poster is meant to lead the viewer to product and to create in the mind of the viewer a positive attitude toward the message being propounded in the poster.

The Illustrative Poster

Illustrative posters are those designs which represent situations, people or objects shown by graphic or photographic means.

Most of the posters found in the hindi film industry of the commercial films are of this type. The basic rule is to put most of the characters into the poster regardless of the type of film or the need of a design or construction. Haphazard designs have formed a major part of the film scene.



The Objective Informative Poster

Those posters which impart information in a manner that is as objective as possible and keep the information factual are the objective informative poster. The artist does not manifest his subjective artistic feeling. These posters have an almost anonymous expression.

This type of poster for films is not very common except for the typographic posters that are made nowadays. Here the objective of the poster is only to impart information about the film through the written word. Sometimes it is supported by a visual. But this type of poster in its strictest sense is found more in product advertising. It is more suitable for that purpose.

The Constructive Poster

The principle of arrangement always forms the basis of a constructive poster. The elements are subordinate to the design. There is a proportional ratio between them and also between them and the design.

Few examples of this can be found in film posters. There are some posters that give a feeling of being constructive posters but a closer look shows that they are not so. They just give an impression of being so. Only recently did a new film have its poster designed totally as a constructive poster. This is for the film "PARTY". The composition and the color scheme are the main features of the poster. The characters do mean any thing except being secondary to the design.

An NFDC Production

EASTMANCOLOUR

PARTY

DIRECTED & PHOTOGRAPHED BY
GOVIND NIHALANI

WRITTEN BY
MAHESH ELKUNCHWAR

IN HINDI



पार्टी

The Experimental Poster

The experimental poster always surprises, the novel one dominates. The forms and the variety of forms appear strange at first because they still donot belong to the form-vocabulary of their time. These posters are ahead of their time.

The few examples of this typr are a few years old. Although today they would be called illustrative posters in those times they could have been experimental posters. The style in which they were handled was totally different from the existing style of that period. These are ~~from~~ from the early sixties.

EARLY POSTERS

The early phase saw the posters being painted by most of the artists. Mostly they were fine artists who did illustrative work. The posters were painted in actual size and then printed. Even when they were in two color they were made in actual size.

The famous artists of this period were:

Ghanshyam Desai: This artist preferred to work in a cut color style. He used flat tones and a minimum of color. Although he was a fine artist his use of color and his style of drawing was that of a commercial artist.

V.R.Bhide: He too was a fine artist and worked almost in the academic style. He used a lot of background illustrations and did elaborate work.

These people worked in the thirties and the early forties. During the forties and the fifties many more artists from fine art schools entered this field. They were:

S.M.Pandit: This artist had excellent control over the brush and the palette. He took inspiration from the roman concept of exaggerated anatomy and he tended to glorify his characters.

B.Vishvanath:

This man introduced a new style in painting. He used his brush with a deftness that gave him a effect of roughness. He popularised strokework as his work was called.

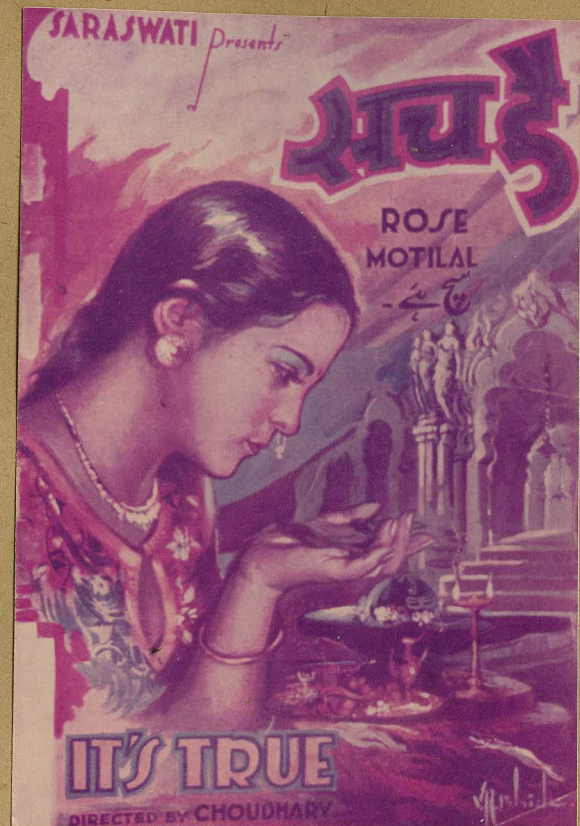
Ratan Batra:

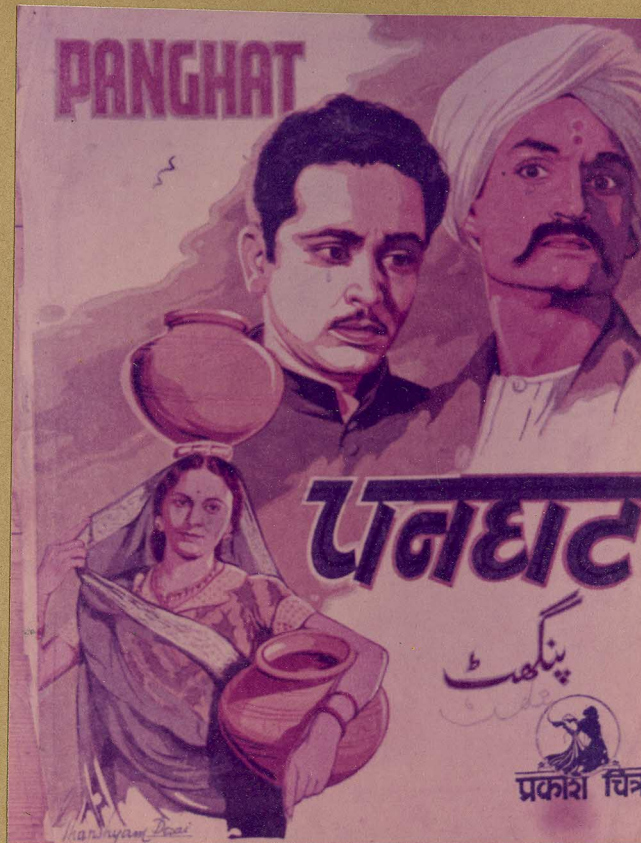
He too worked in a style similar to that of s.m. pandit's.

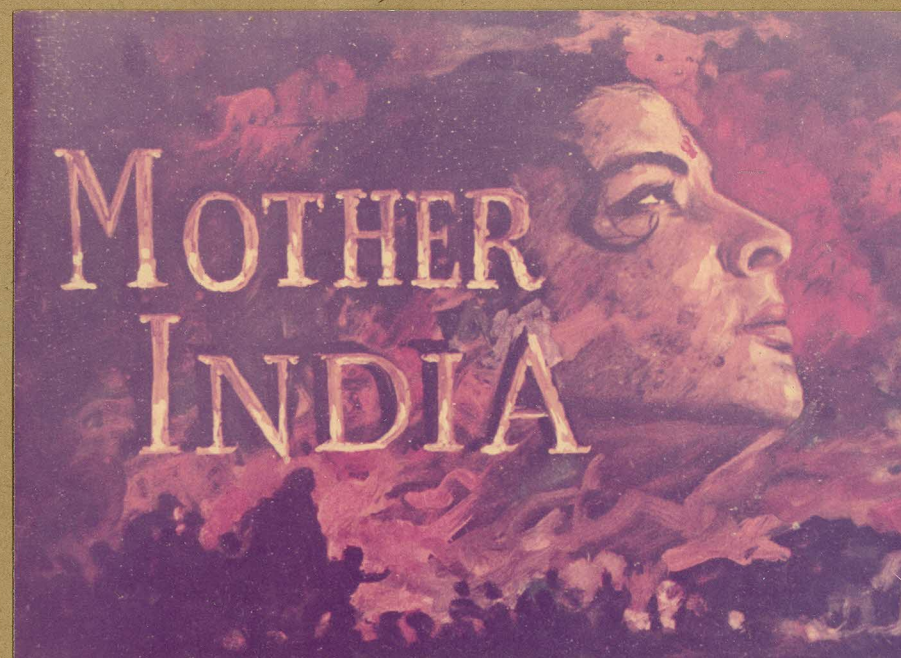
Satish Agarwal:

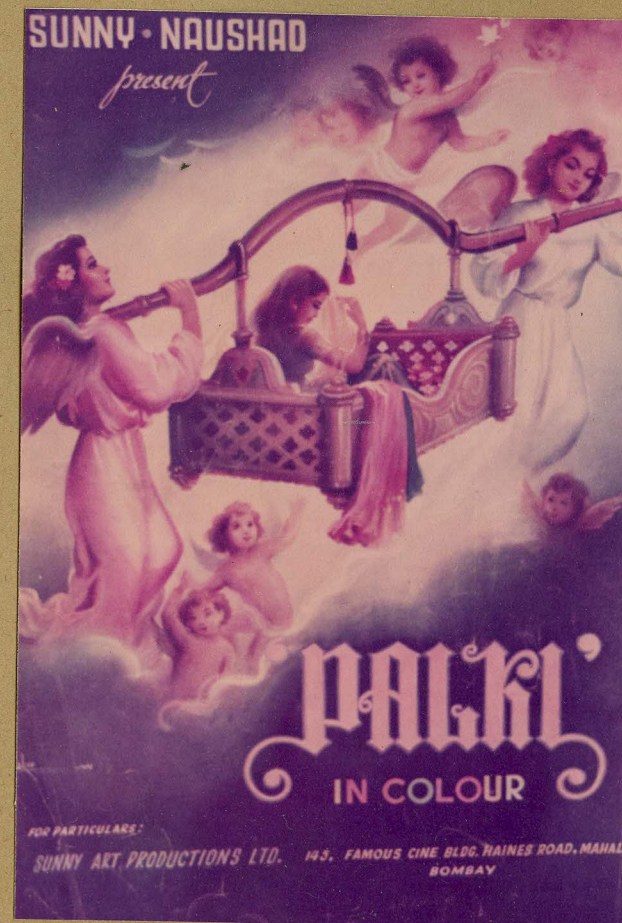
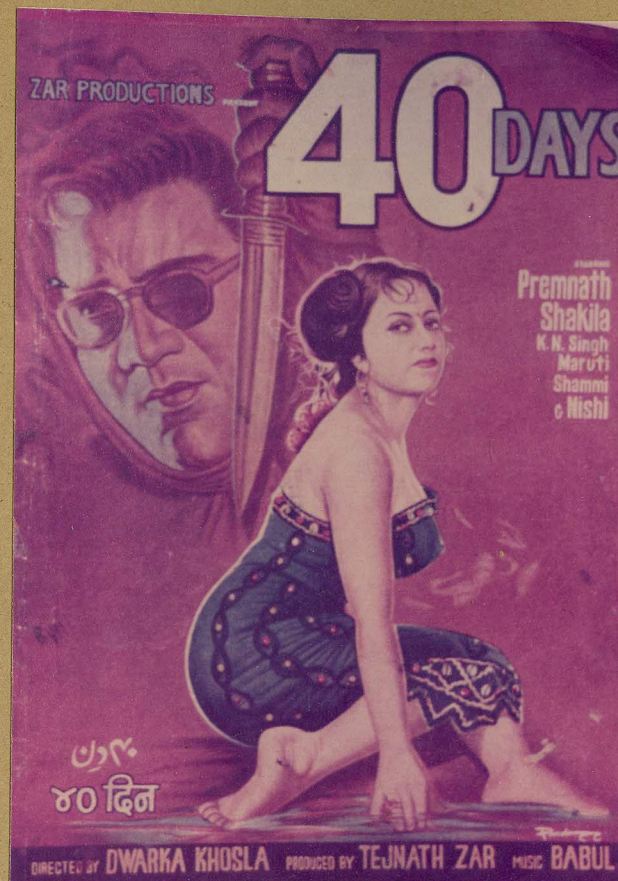
In the late forties this artist came into the limelight. He was a man with no academic study of art and within a period of a few years he had become a leading artist. He used the royal academic style of painting. His work was always highly finished and glossy.

The forties and the fifties were the period of the fine artists. Then there were the people like Meghani, Pednekar, Kamble and Kale. These people had a few years of glory and then due to their restrictive styles they faded out.





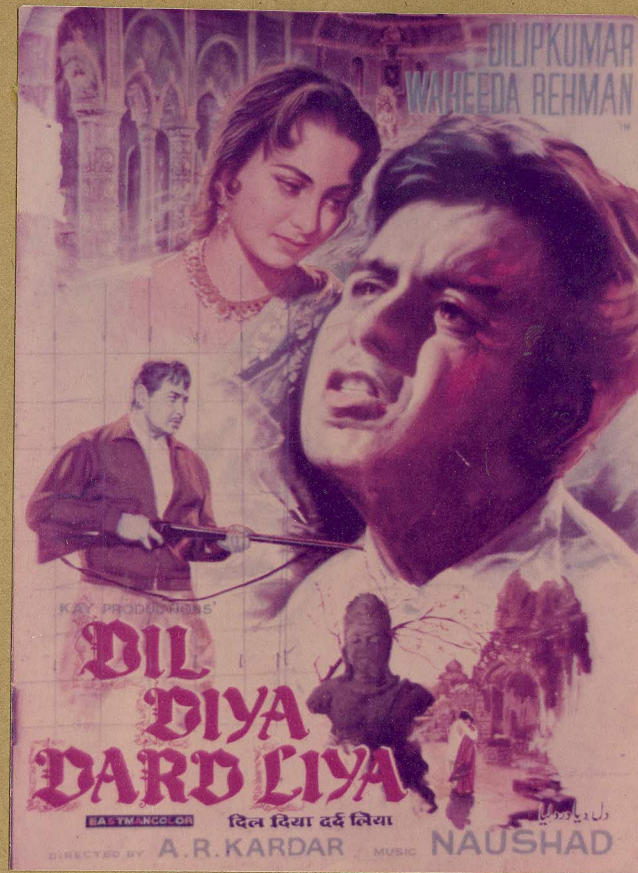


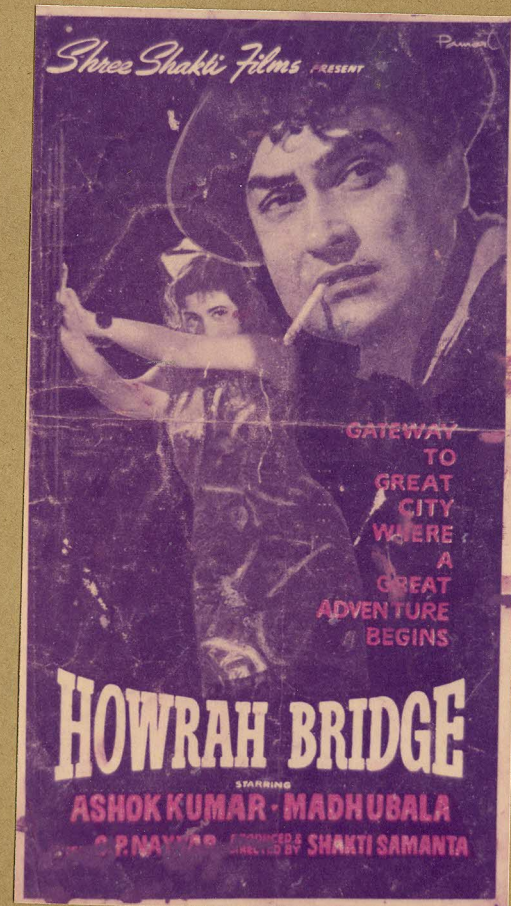
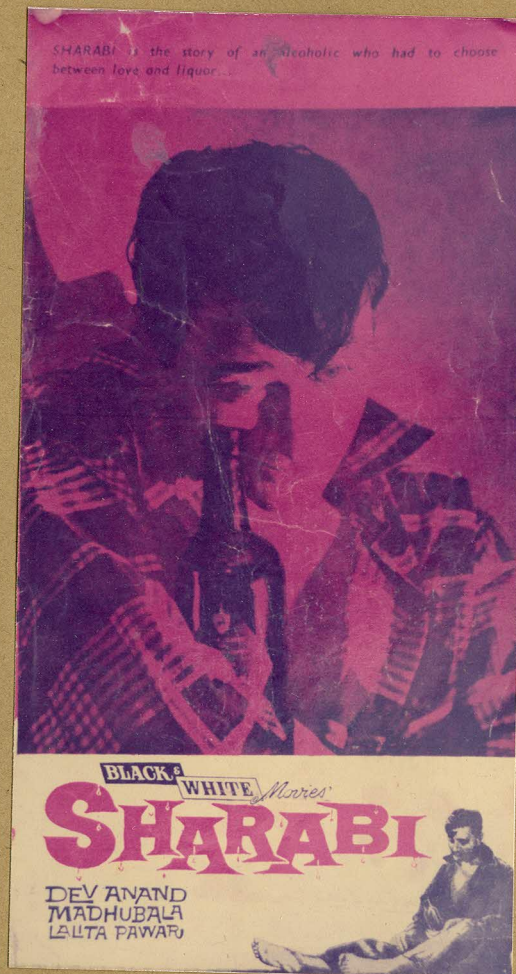


INTRODUCTION OF PHOTOGRAPHS

During the fifties and the sixties there was a change in the method of illustration. Instead of the traditional way of painting use of photographs was introduced. Photographs were directly pasted on the artworks. This was helpful in many ways to the artist. He did not have to spend a lot of time painting. This usually took around ten days for a single poster design. Now with the use of black and white photographs a artwork could be made in a short span of one day. The result of this was also that people who did not know painting took up to designing and flooded the film industry.

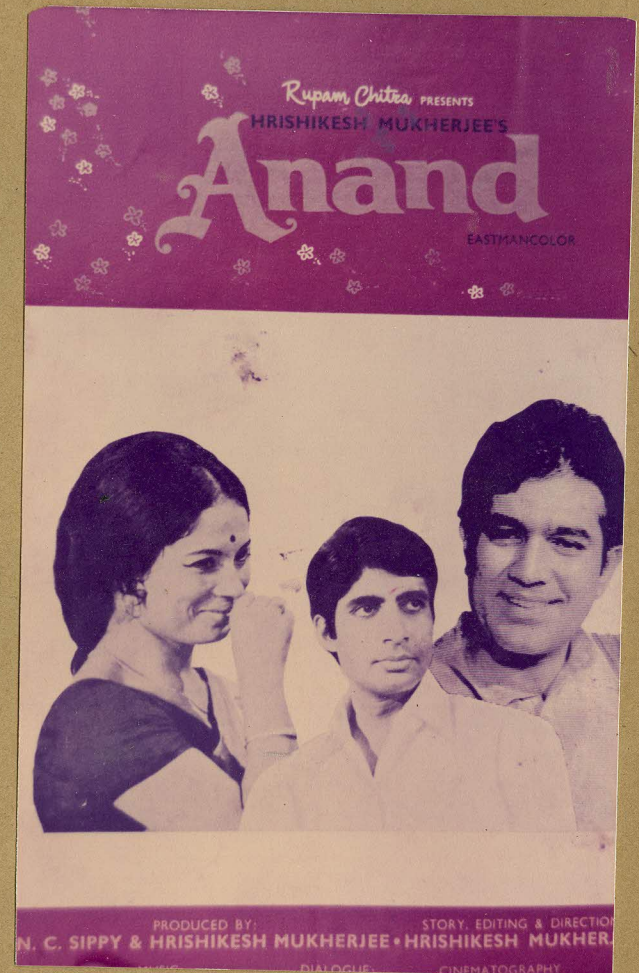
In the sixties the artists there were many new people like C.Mohan, Diwaker, Lakshman, Vasudeo, Vishnu and Krishna Parab.

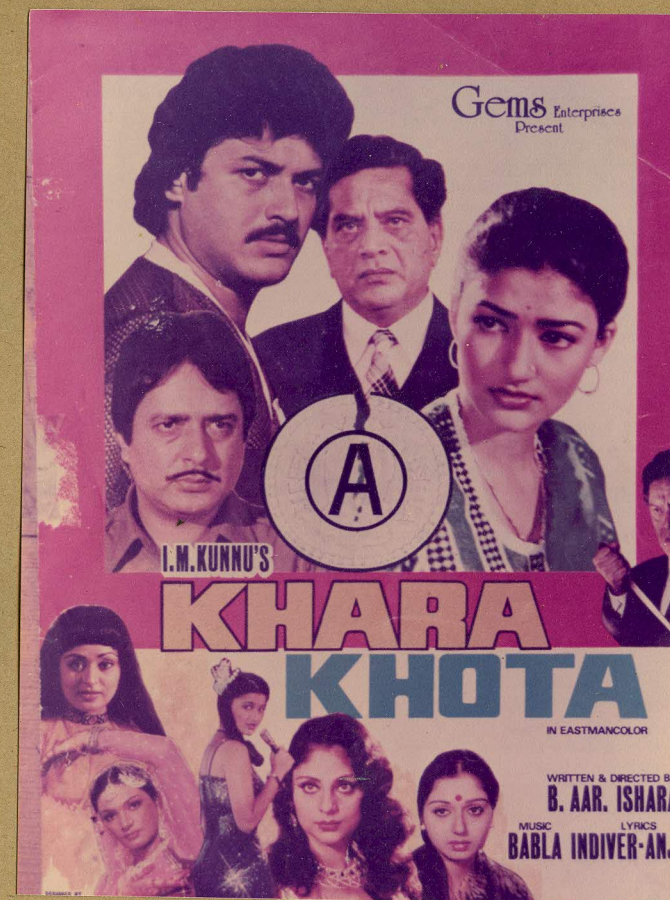




Just about the sixties period another change took place. This was due to the introduction of cutting pasting and also because of availability of hand set lettering. The Panel system was introduced or we should become more suitable for this type of work.

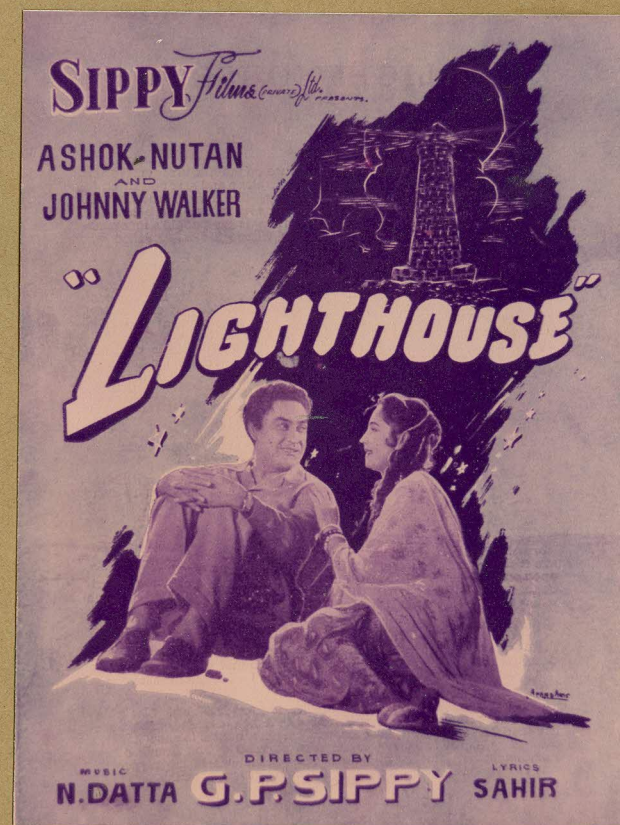
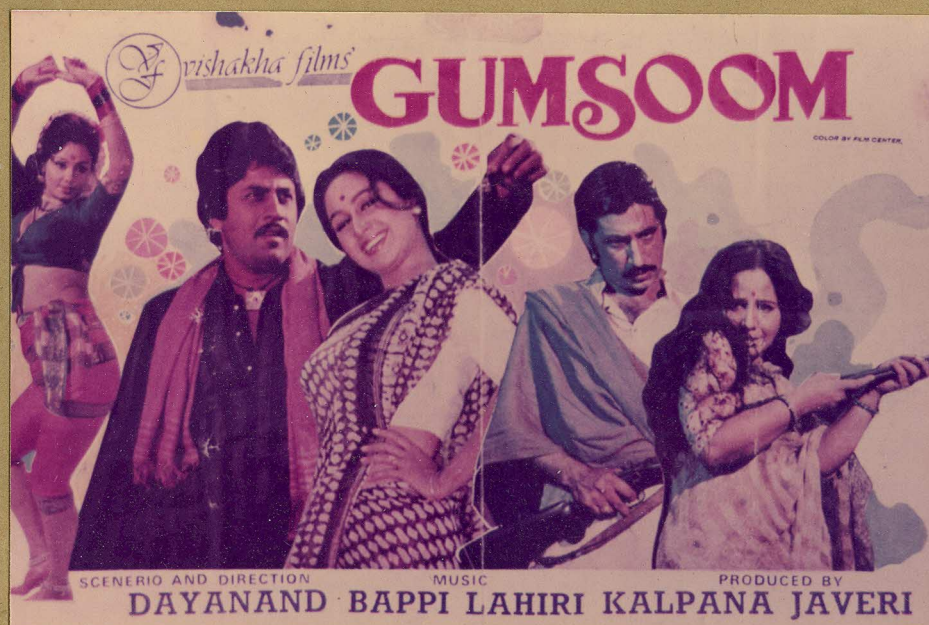
What was done that the illustrations were pasted in a panel and the typography was put outside this panel in a strip of white. Because at that time people were not aware of separate artworks to have supered lettering. So to avoid white lettering strips on the colored panel they separated the two into different panels.





Improvement in the printing techniques and the introduction of typesetting made a lot of difference in the quality of the typography.

Formerly, since the design was wholly hand painted even the lettering was hand painted on to the design with the illustrations. Because the typesetting was not available the typefaces used did not have much variety and were not very accurate. The above changes helped in improving the quality of the typography. Since the typefaces were available in many point sizes and could be accurately calculated the designs also started getting a better balanced look. But this was true only for the conscious designers. The rest just did not care.



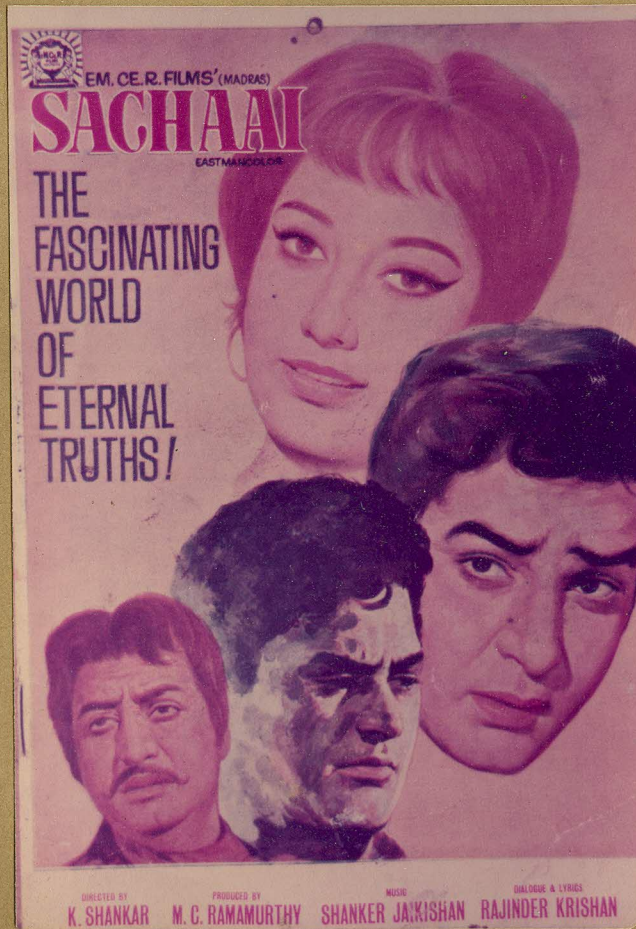
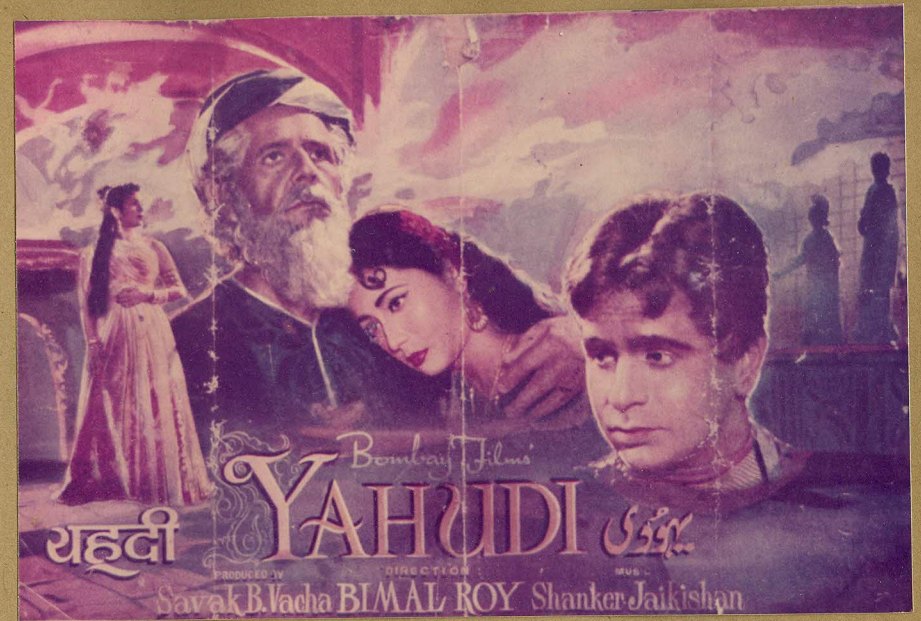
LAYOUTS

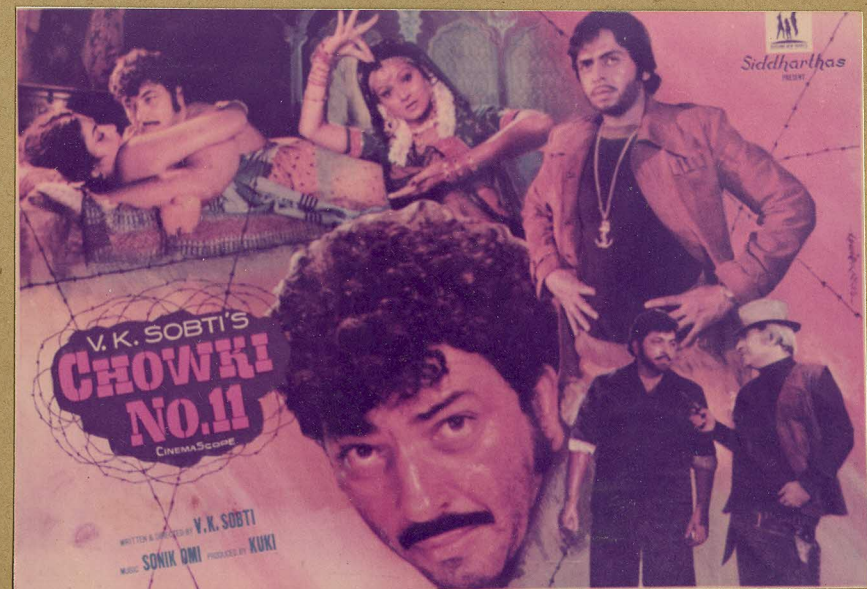
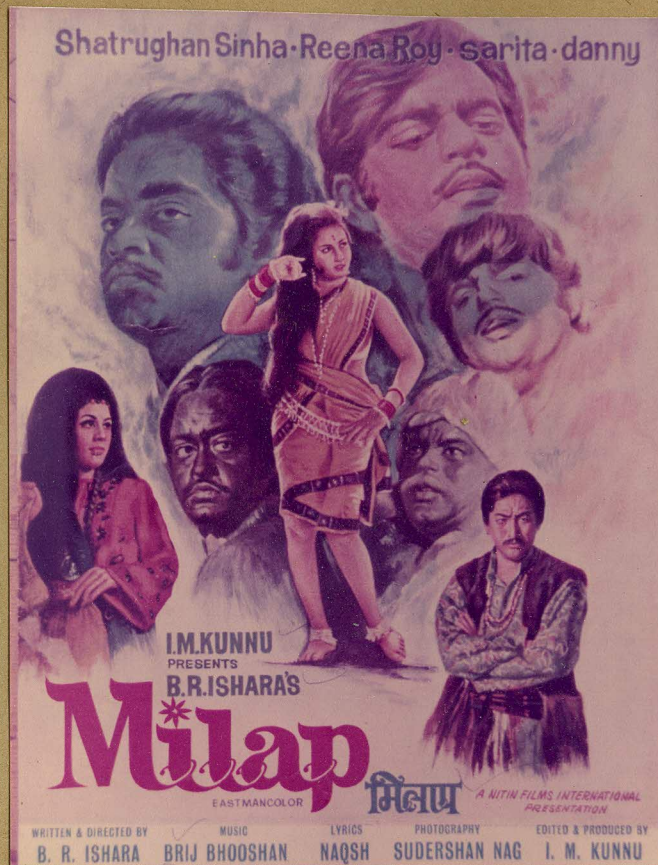
The layouts in the posters of the hindi films have not shown much changes during the last five to six decades. The majority of the layouts are the same. The hero or the heroine being larger in the design than the other characters and random placing of the characters. There is no deviation from this and the layout has become standard. There are basically three types of layouts used:

- 1) The centre heavy or the cluttered layout with as many photographs or illustrations as possible.
- 2) The two sided design. This has two characters on two sides and some illustration in the centre. This can also be called the triangular layout.
- 3) The single photo layout.

THE CLUTTERED LAYOUT

This type of layout is the most commonly found layout for posters. It has been use since film posters have been made in India. In this type of layouts there is a central character which is larger than the rest of the characters. Then there is a heirarchy of characters to be placed. The heroine is then placed near the hero and then there is the villain. There is the supporting cast which is put in almost no differentiation in size. All these type of layouts follow this principle.

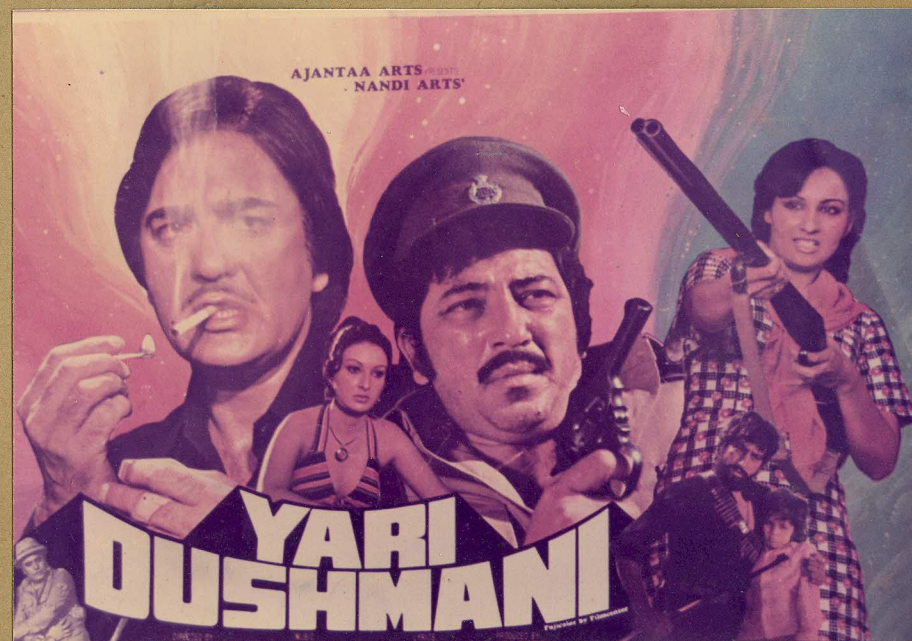
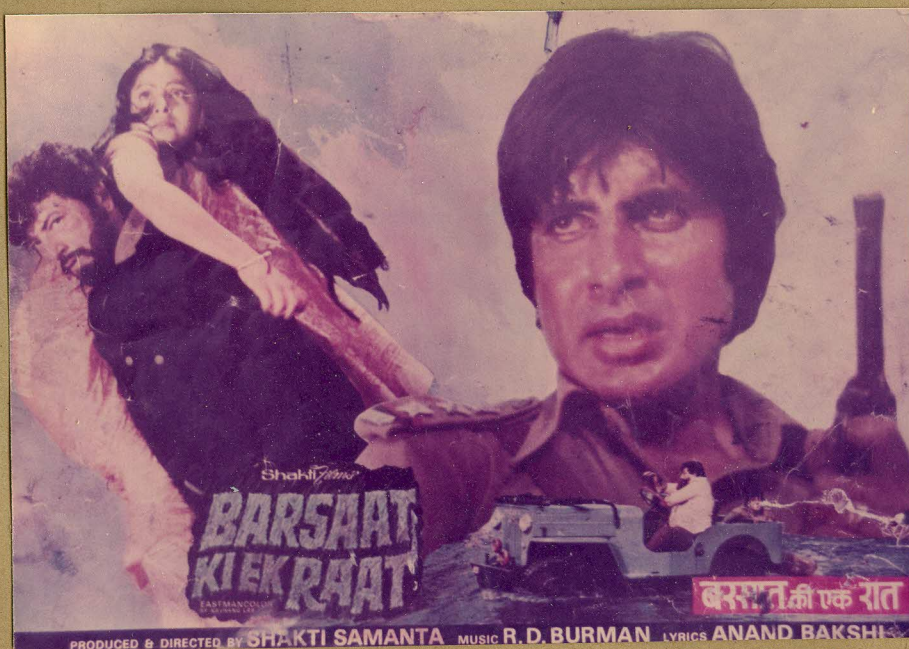
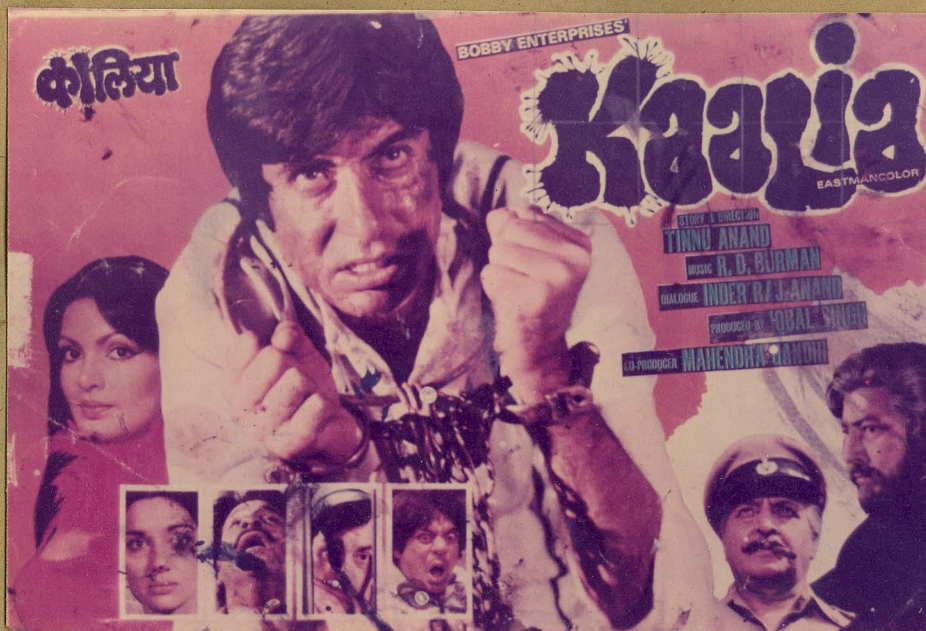






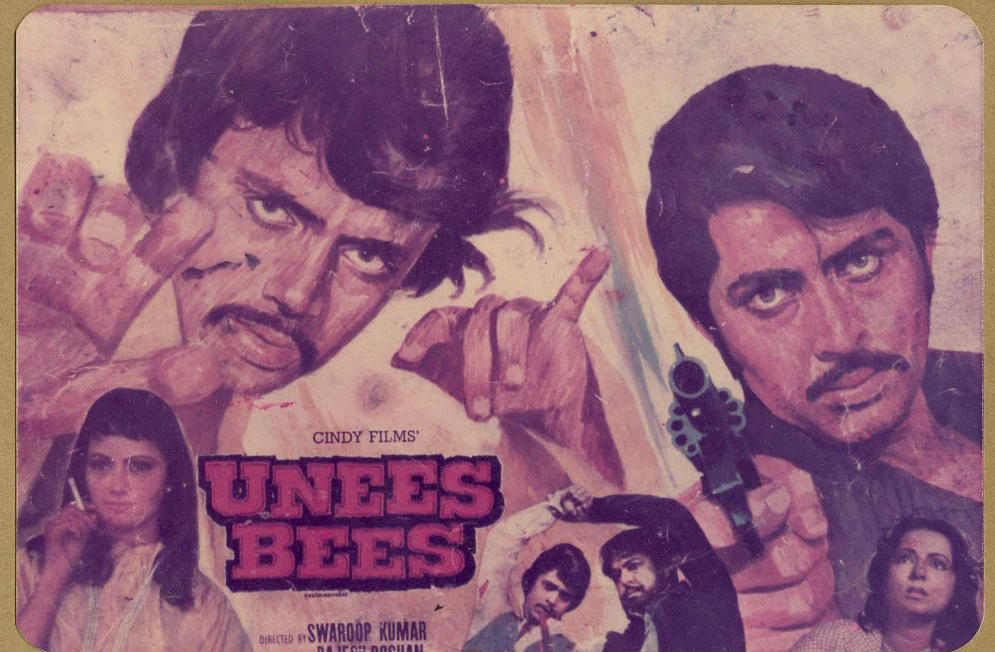
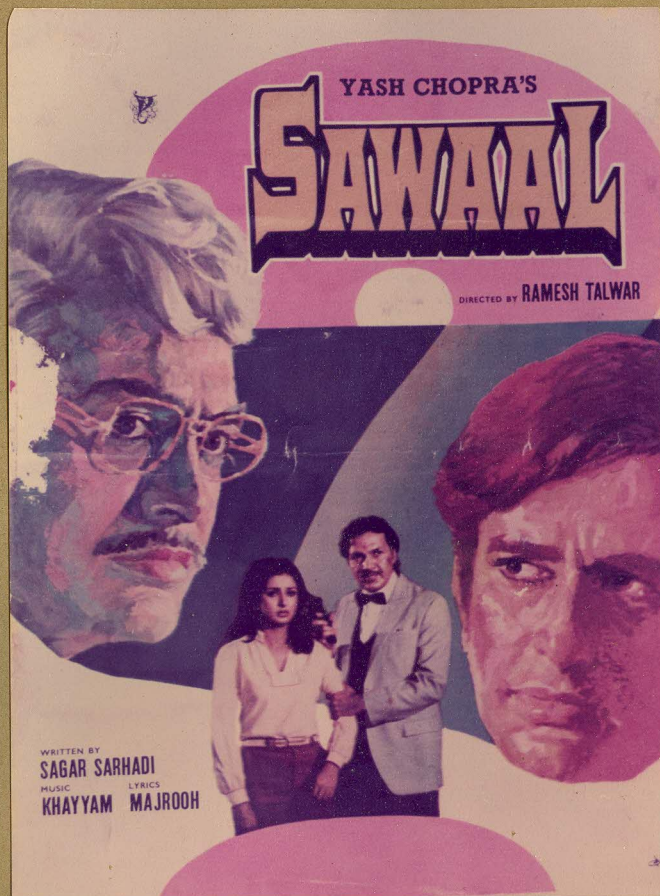


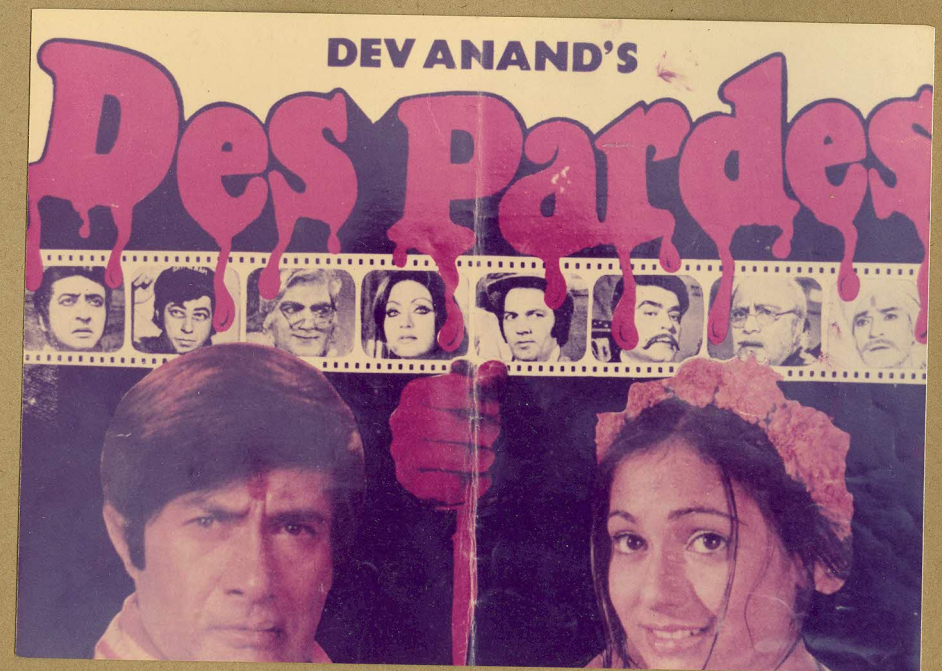
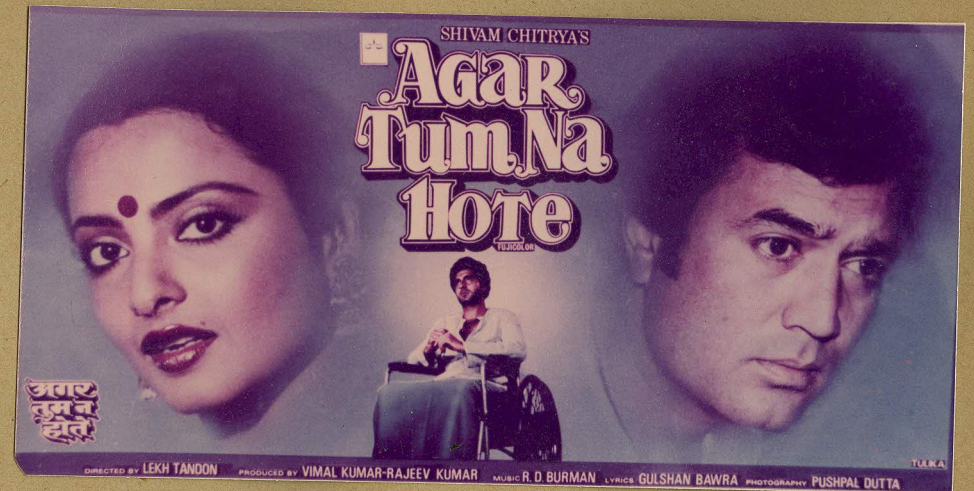




THE TWO-SIDED LAYOUT

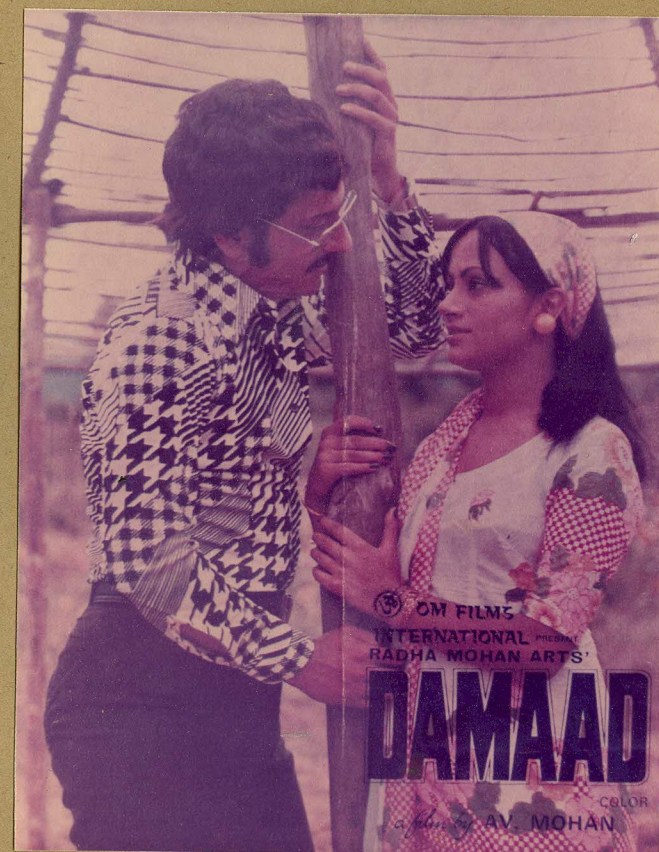
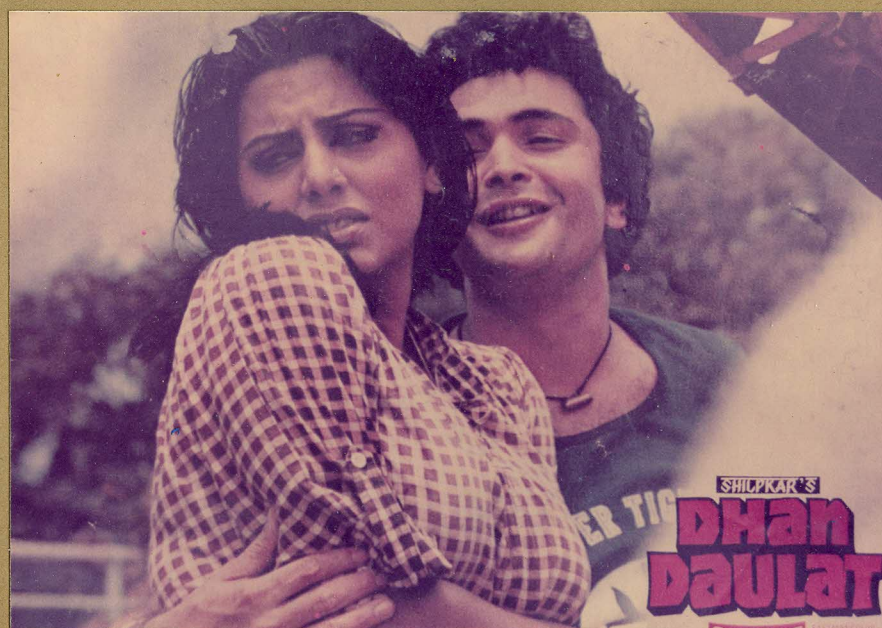
This type of layout was a direct result of the multi-starrer films. When there were two heroes in the film to give both heroes equal weightage in the design they were both placed on two sides of the poster. They both would be of almost equal size. The other characters would be placed in the centre of these two pictures. Even when there was to be clash among two characters in the film then these layouts are used. The triangular romantics also have these types of layouts for their posters.





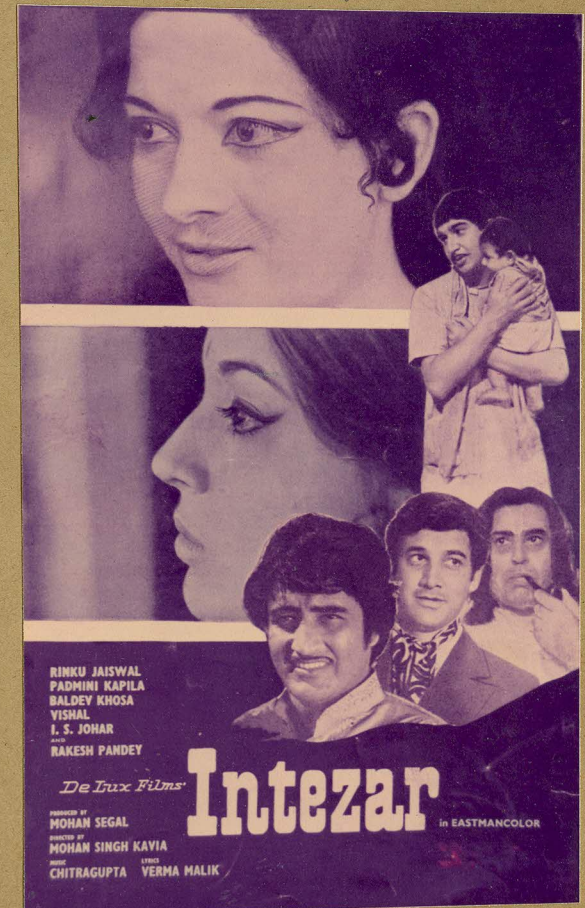
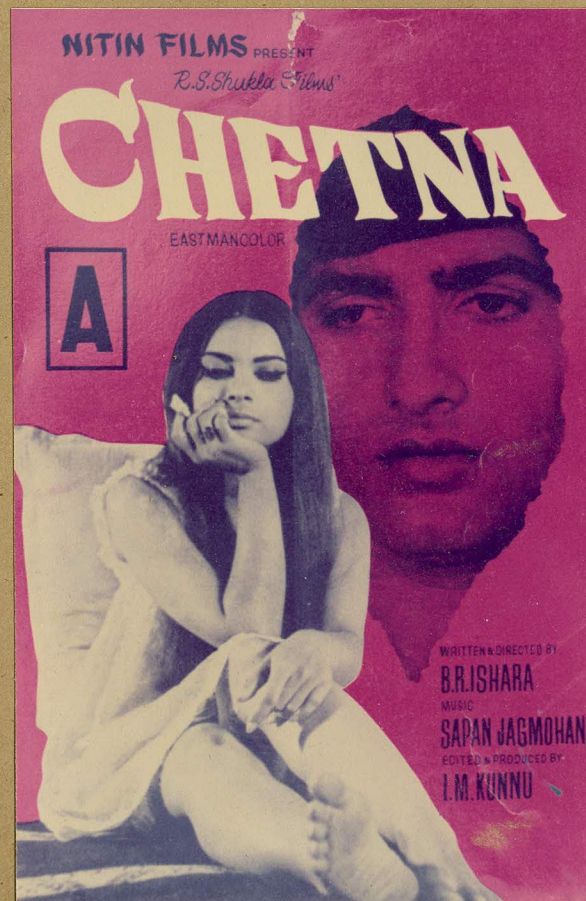
THE SINGLE PHOTO LAYOUT

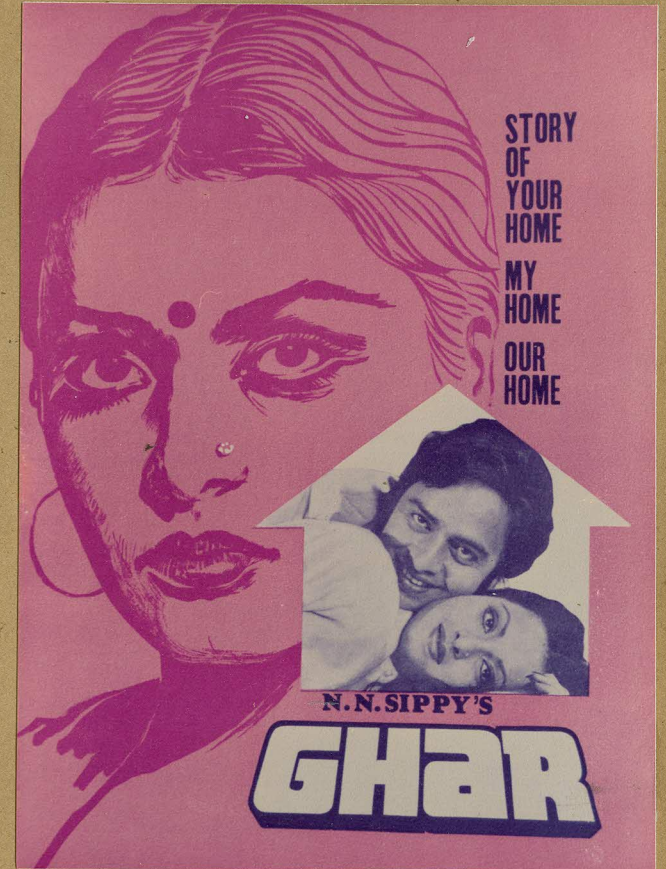
This layout is found least among the commercial hindi film posters. Here a single photo is used for the entire space of the poster. The lettering and the logotype is supered on the photograph. This looks very sober. But today use of vulgar photographs has made even these layouts look cheap. The photographs of this type of layout reflects the mood of the film or the meaning of the title.



COLOR IN POSTERS

Usually it has been the rule to use gaudy colors for the posters. Films being a commercial and glamorous medium makes full use of colors inevitable. It has been the rule to paint the posters in heavily contrasting color schemes. But there have been exceptions to this. There have been people who have decided on two color design to enhance the feeling of the type of film. Many have used black and white designs. But these are rare occasions. Mostly people who have a limited small budget resort to this method.

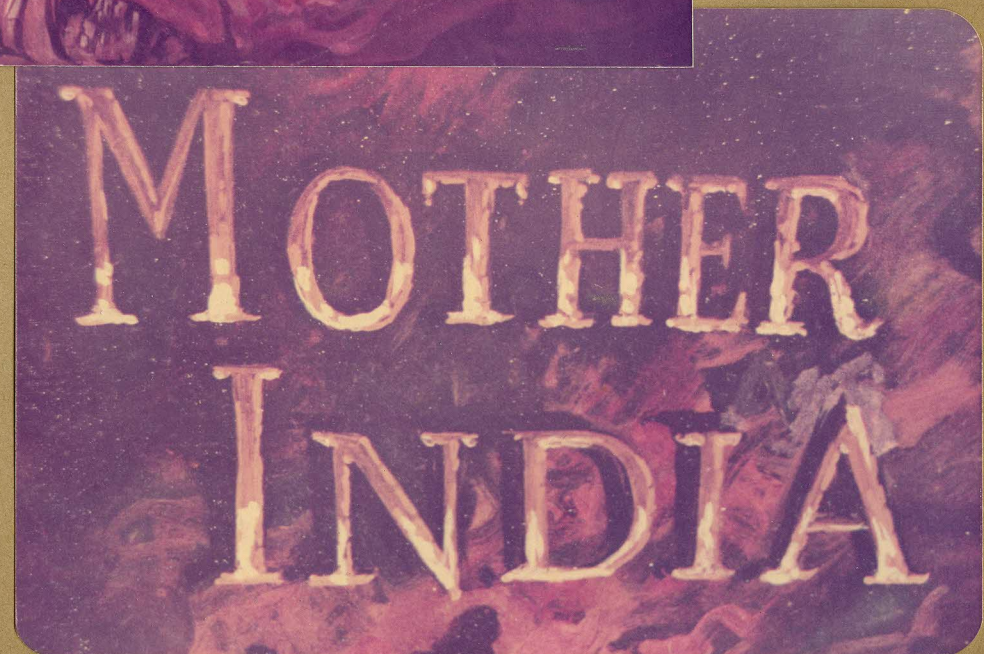
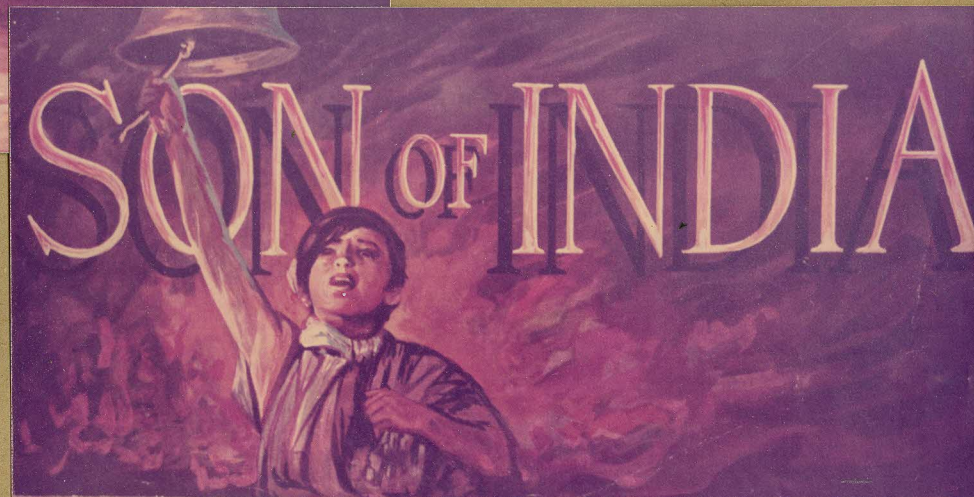
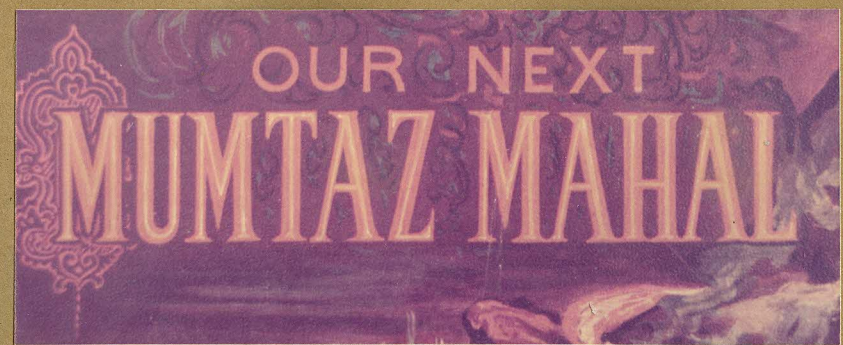
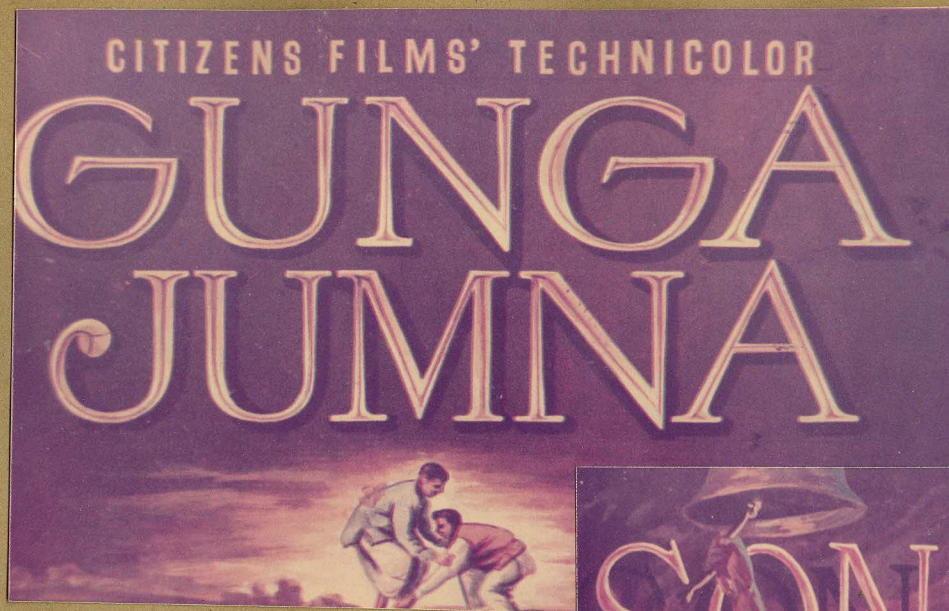


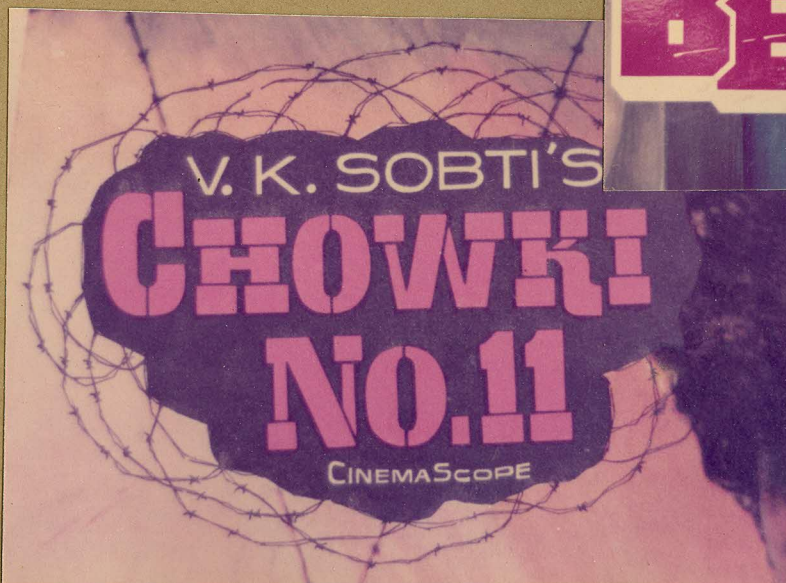
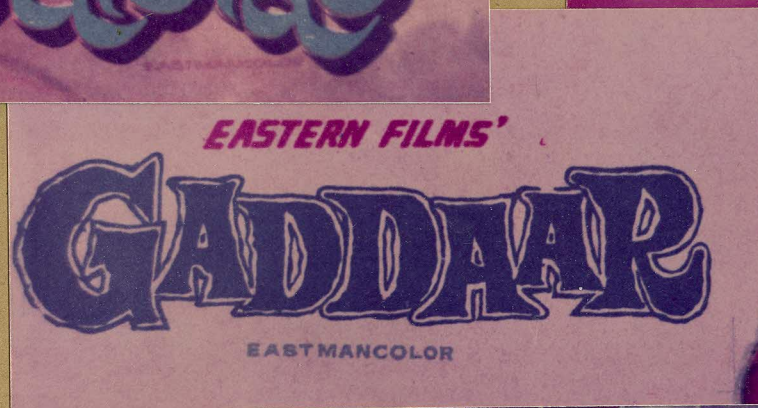
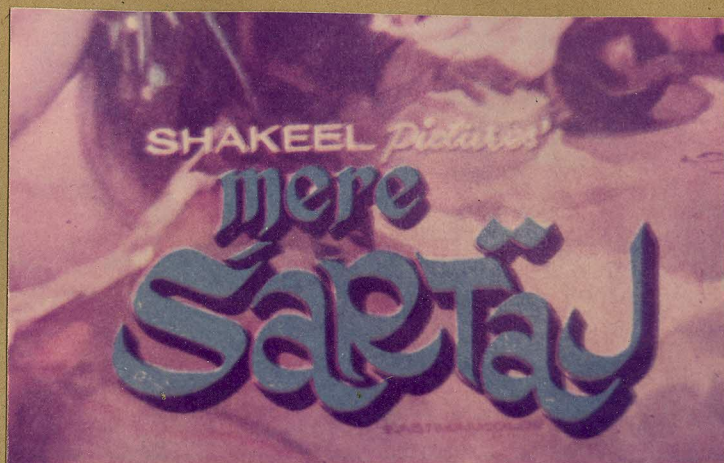


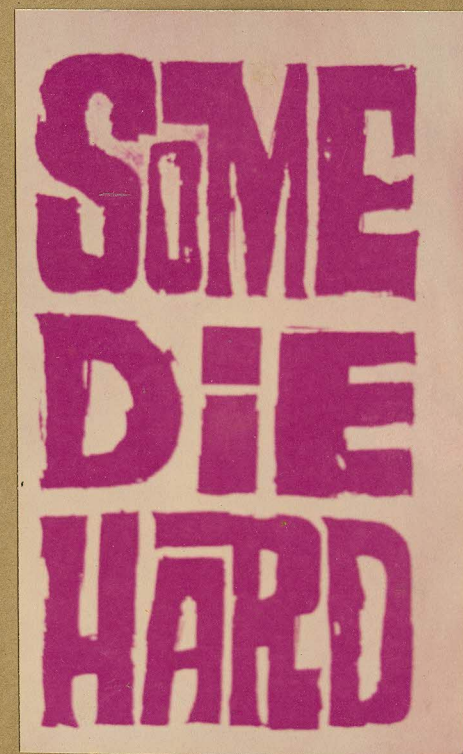
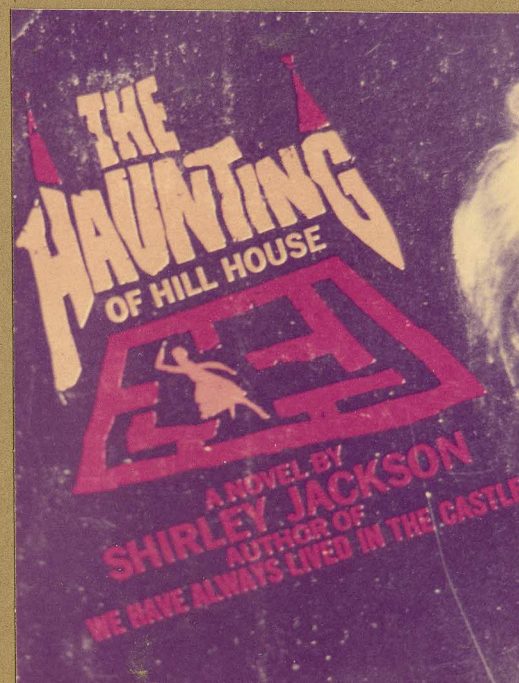
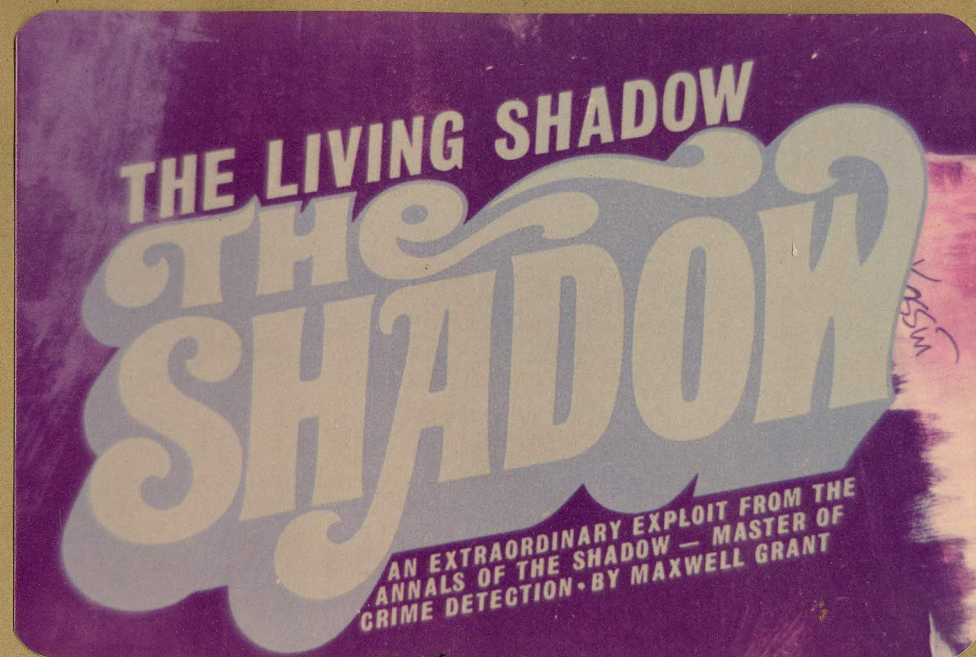
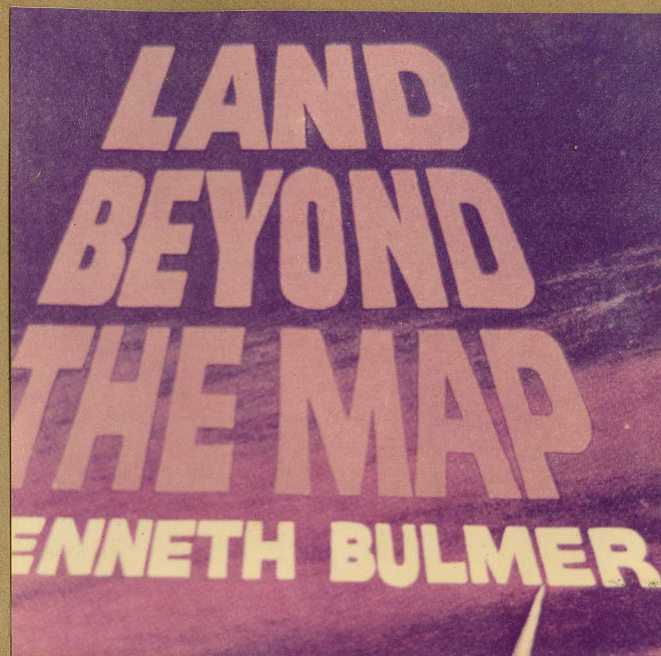
LOGOTYPE DESIGN

It was seen in the thirties and the forties that mostly the artists did not care to design the logotype of the film. The type used was mostly the roman serif type with some variation or any arbitrary style with no relation to the type or character of the film.

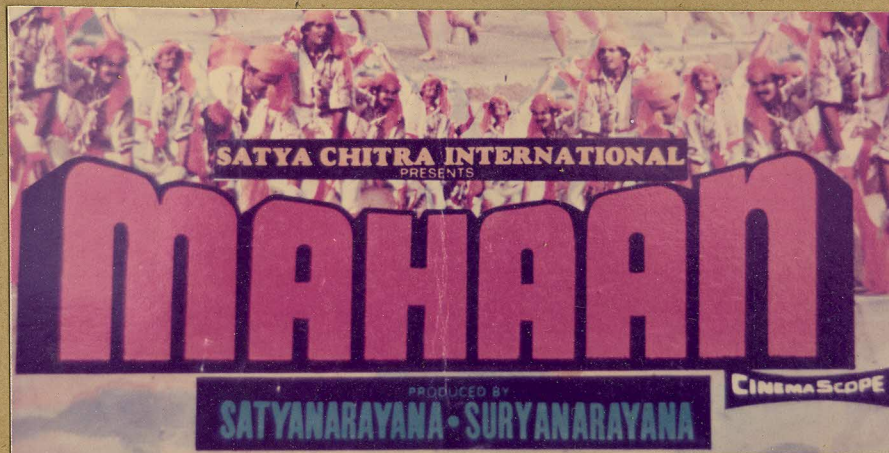
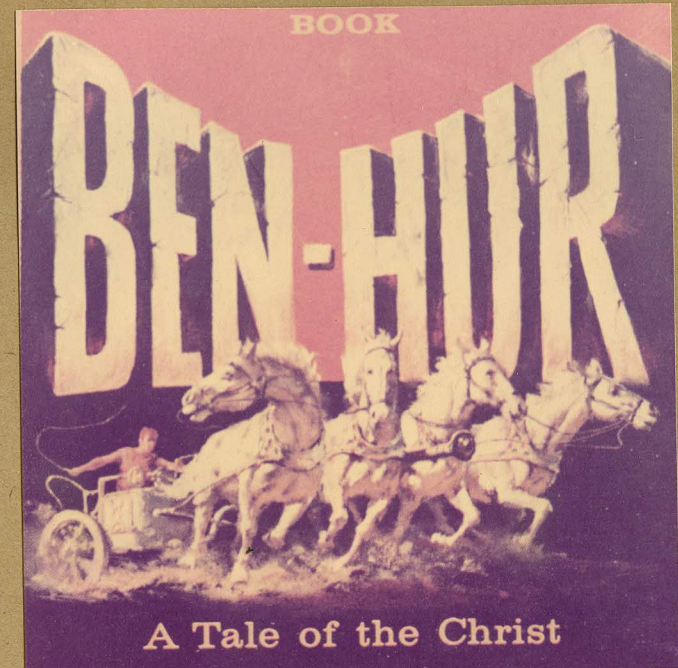
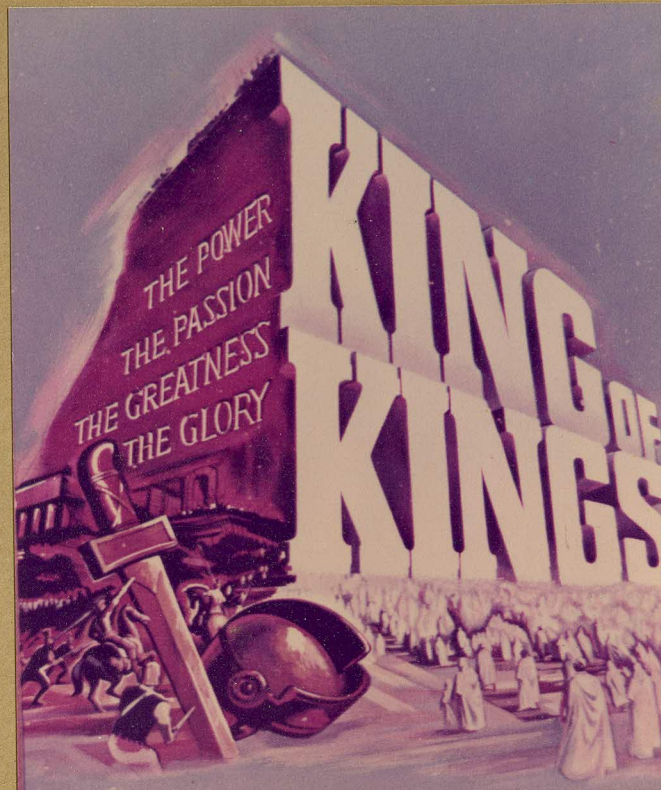
Then with the foreign influence this changed. People who were conscious of their work usually tried to change according to the design changes seen in the foreign designs. Today we see that logotypes are consciously designed with a feeling for the type of film.







A typical style of making a logotype is to make it in the large Ben-Hur style. In this style the logotype gives a feeling that the film is a large budget and massive star cast film. This has become very common in the hindi film industry. The influence is directly related to the foreign films which had this type of logotype. Mostly historical films have this type of logotypes.



THE FOREIGN INFLUENCE.

We have found that many layouts have directly been copied from foreign designs. In the early period there was a trend to collect book jackets which appeared on the american novels. Some of the layouts were lifted from posters of American films.

But despite the fact that they have been copied some of them have resulted in good posters. Posters different from the run of the mill type.

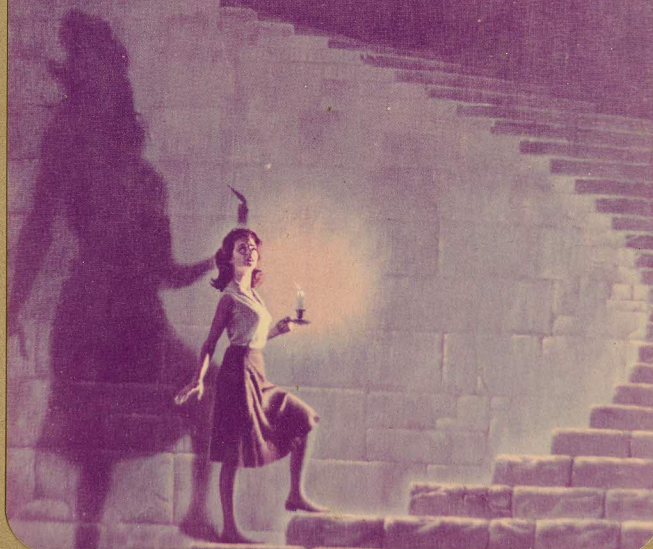
The Spiral Staircase

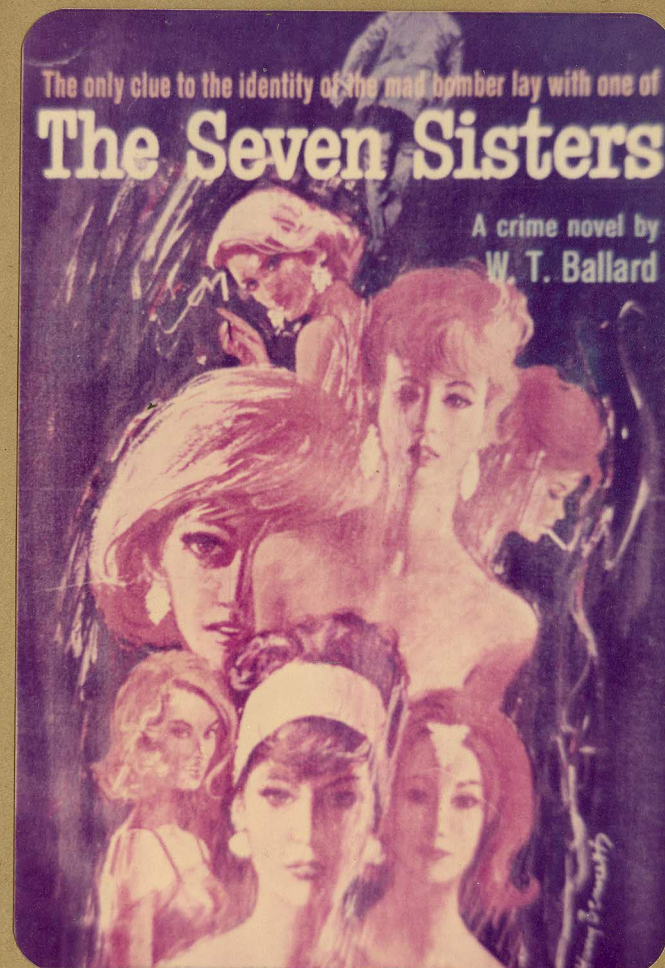
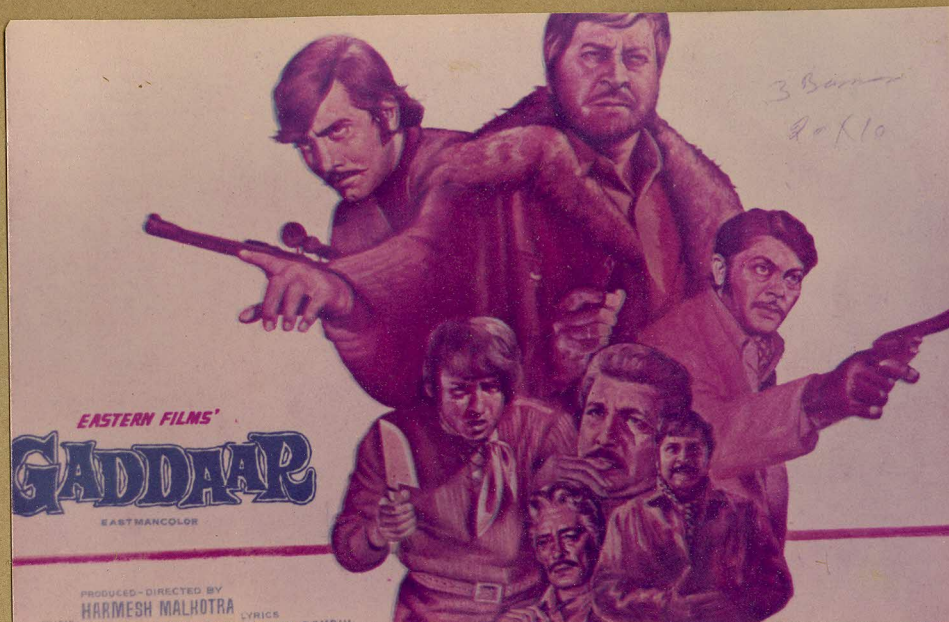
by Ethel Lina White

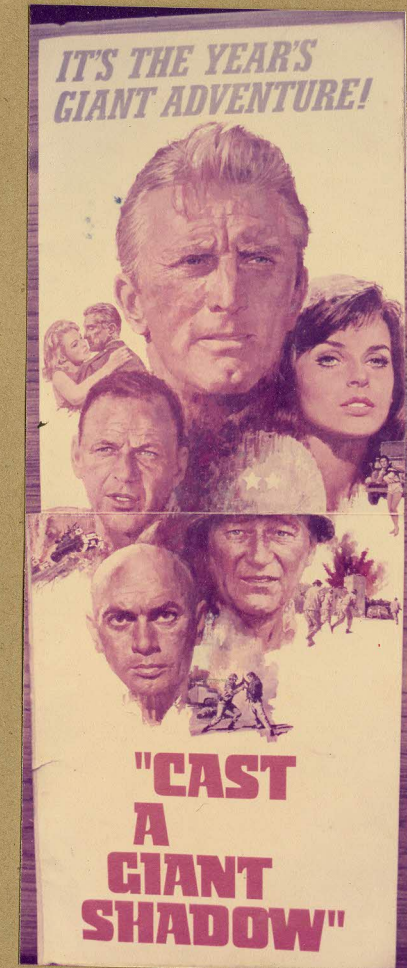
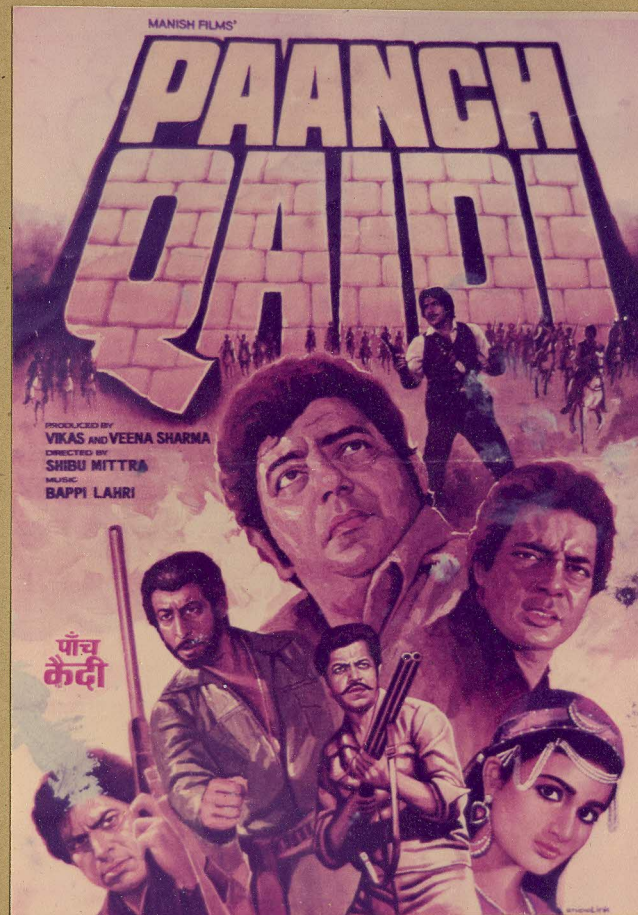
A young girl trapped in a mansion of murder
—an all-time classic of suspense.

"Astonishing and diabolical shock...required reading"

—New York Herald Tribune



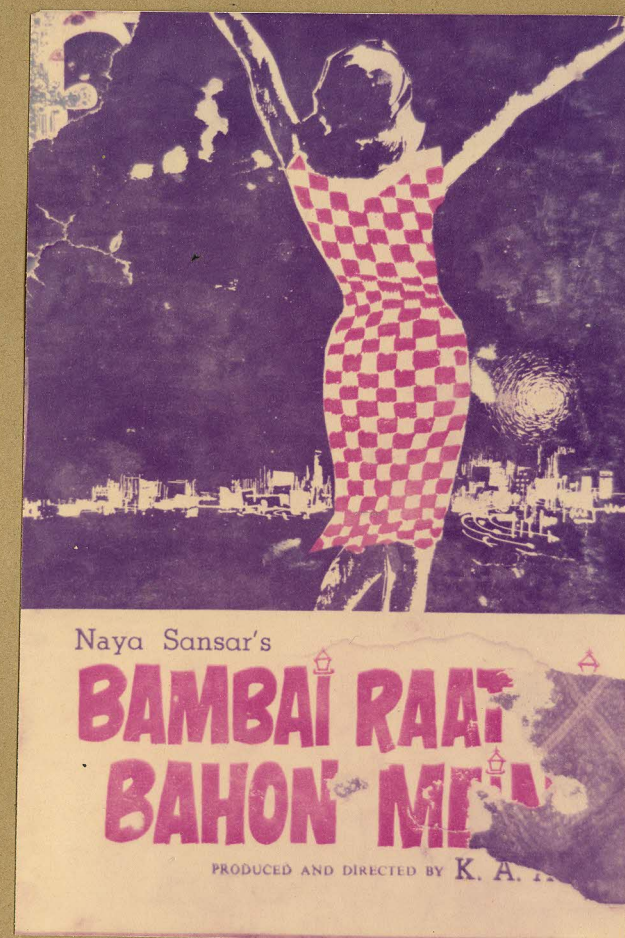
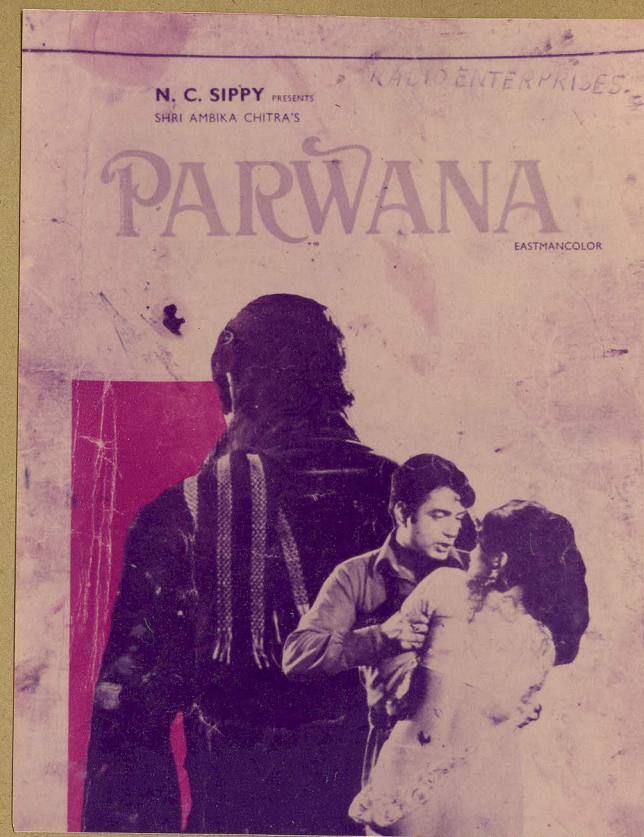




THE EXCEPTIONS

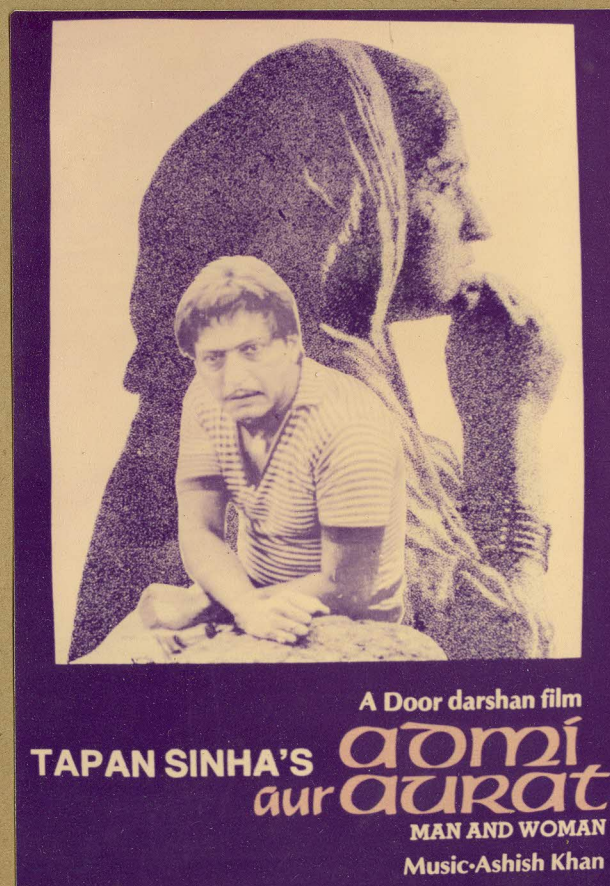
Even though the entire hindi film industry is filled with posters that are of the run of the mill type there have been efforts of the artists to make different designs. Designs which have a touch of the aesthetic and artistic about them. These posters are the experimental posters of their time. It is difficult now to gauge their effectiveness in their time. But these films have been acclaimed in their time as Films with a new trend. They have been trend setters.

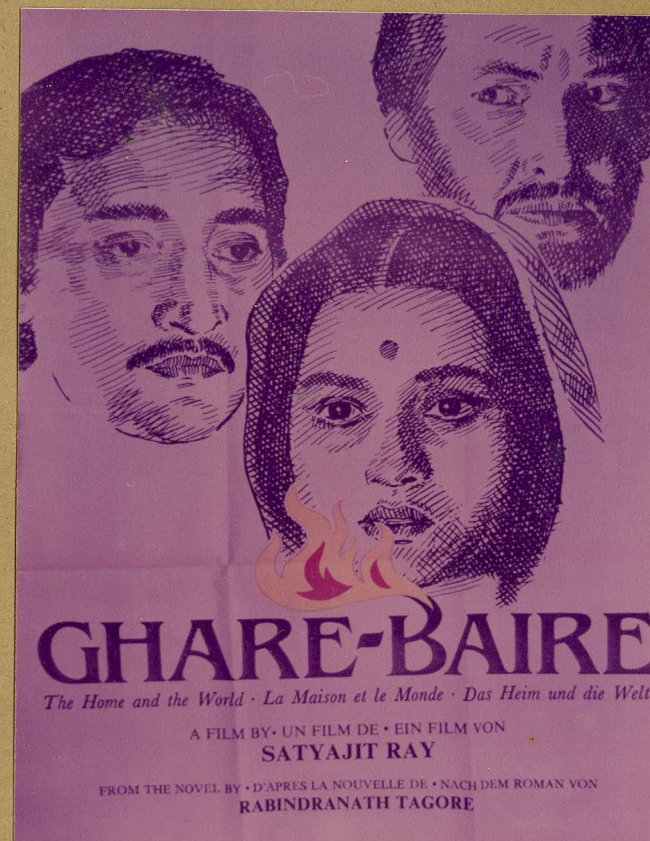
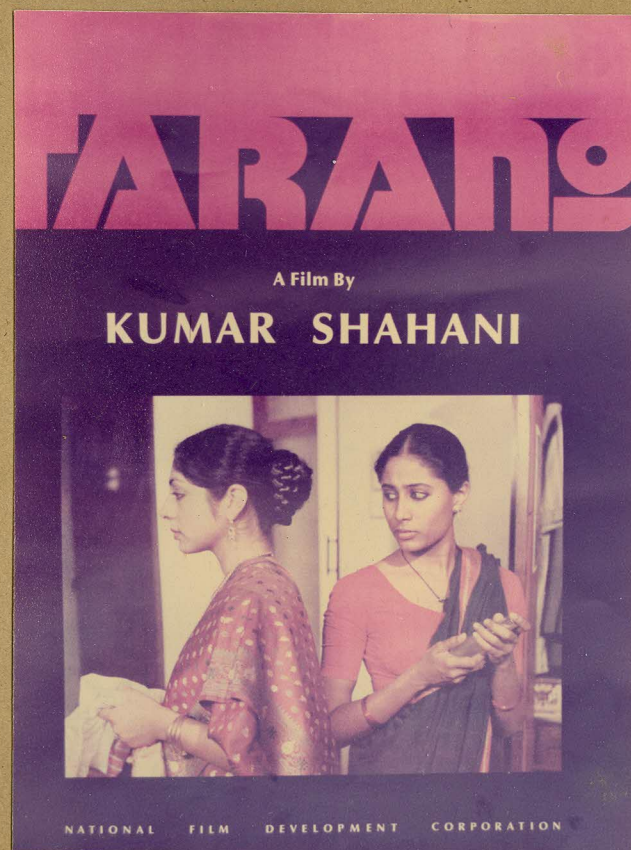




THE ART FILMS

The art films or the new wave films are the trend setters of today's society. These films show a conscious effort to design each and every aspect of the film. Till today the people designing the posters for the hindi commercial films are not graphic designers. But now there is an effort by the new wave directors to get graphic designers to make their posters. These designers see that graphics are taken full advantage off in designing the posters. There is an even greater consciousness about the typography. The style seen in these posters is radically different from the commercial posters. People like Satyajit Ray and Mrinal Sen have built up an awareness about the design of posters. These are people with an eye for graphics and for advantage that can be taken by the use of photographic and illustrative techniques.





Conclusion

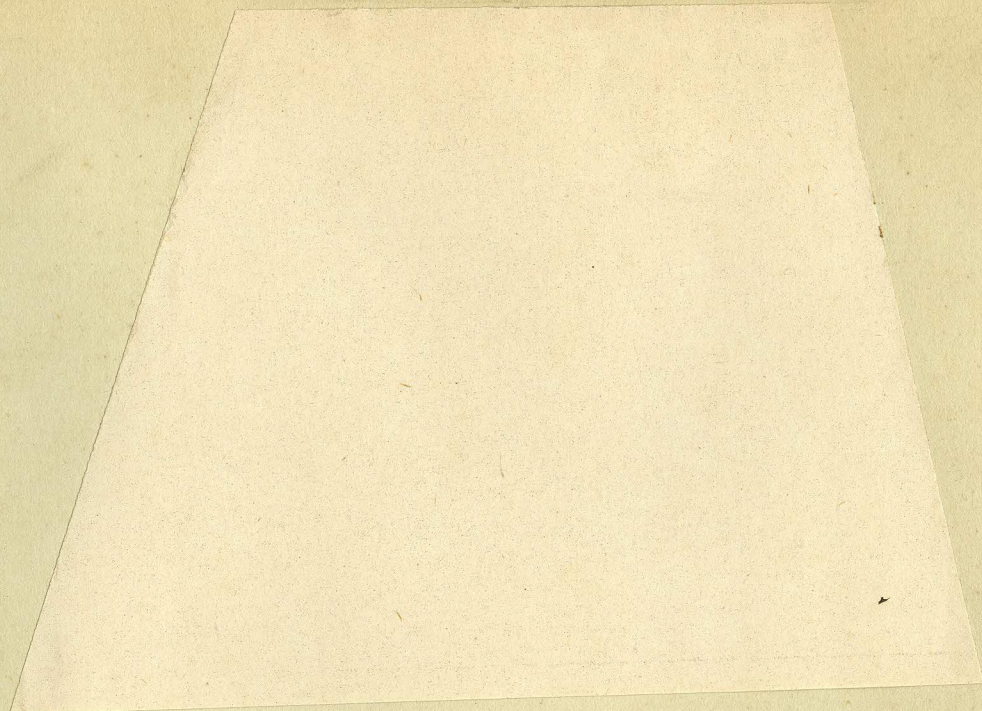
The early period of films has not been covered too well in this investigation because the material is not easily available. The visual data and the people who know about the artists of that time do not exist. And if they do then they were beyond my reach.

All I can say that at the end of it I have tried to put forward a small investigation into the advertising of hindi films. This by itself is a big task because an eighty year old medium cannot be thoroughly done in a few months. But nevertheless I have tried. This investigation shows how various changes came about in posters of films and some of the people who have worked for films. This is not a detailed analysis but some salient points about posters which were noticed during our research and investigation.

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L. I. T. Bombay.



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