

# Used Indian Postal Reply Cards are Canvases for Miniature Paintings

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For over a thousand years paintings in miniature form have reflected the imagination and skills of artists in royal courts of Asia. Originally on narrow palm leaves that could be bound into an album thus easily viewed, early art reflected Buddhist texts, epic myths, and musical modes. Mughal art owes much to Persia with its vibrant tradition of miniature art. In India, the third Mughal Emperor Akbar, had over 100 royal artists working in his court. As Mughal influence declined, Rajasthani motifs flourished. Each royal court employed artists from many religious faiths who worked side by side producing tiny art works, 6 x 9 inches, on paper, silk and ivory. This art was a window into the lives of royalty and commoner alike. Harvesting single tail hairs from squirrels or camels for brushes allowed for intricate intimate detail, spending weeks hand grinding semiprecious gem stones into the finest possible powder so as not to leave even the tiniest lump, allowed these artists to meticulously show tales of bravery, hunting escapades, and religious festive occasions.



This 1973 India Post commemorative self adhesive, 1 rupee photogravure stamp of **Lovers on a Camel**, is a folktale done in miniature by Nasir-ud-Din (1585-1609). In this Rajasthani version of the romantic folktale Maru-Ragini, child prince Dhola married child princess Maru. They were separated for years. Prince Dhola searches for her. A snake bite kills Maru but music magically brings her back to life. This flying camel was instrumental in returning the lovers Dhola and Maru home to live happily ever after.

Local artists continue to produce fine examples of Mughal style miniature art with Hindu themes. By recycling used postal stationery into a tiny canvas, this local artist celebrates art, poetry and music together in this painting of two horses carrying three men. Perhaps they are out hunting or part of a festive procession. The very thin shape outlines, many colours, fine brush strokes and a lot of detail on the riders' cloaks, show his skill. However, the artist forgot to give the third man his foot or a horse, so he sits on the second horse at an impossible angle.



This India Post 6 paisa domestic use post reply card with an indicia (imprinted stamp) of the **Emperor Ashoka Pillar** (the emblem of India) was mailed from Baroda Gujarat on 21-2-1968. During the 3C BCE, Emperor Ashok practised religious tolerance and is remembered by the Ashoka pillar with four Asiatic lions representing the four noble truths of Buddhism.