

Cosmology to Cartography

A Cultural Journey of Indian Maps

11 August – 11 October, 2015
National Museum, New Delhi



Map of the temple of Jagannatha, Puri, Odisha

Cosmography to Cartography takes one on an epic journey from mythological visions of the universe, pilgrimage and religious depictions, to the accurate scientific representation of modern India. It showcases monumental original paintings of religious symbolism from the 15th to 19th centuries juxtaposed with some earliest historical maps of India.

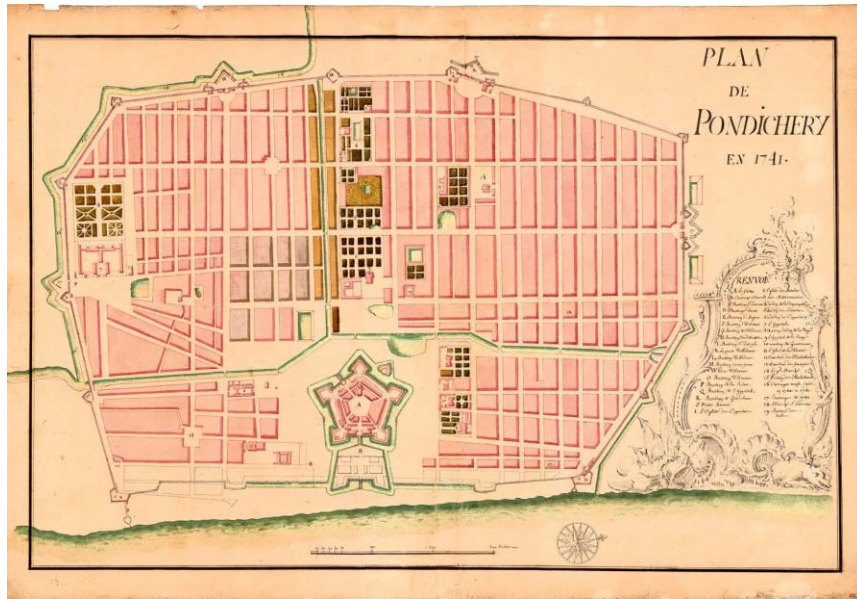
The evolution of maps can be traced from cosmological representation of the 'World of Mortals' to pictographic depictions of ritual landscapes, to the growth of scientific cartography. This is testament of the diverse, competing and global influences which have contributed to the perception of "India" as we understand it today.



Lokapurusha Maps: Geographical regions showcased on the body of the Cosmic Man.

The exhibition features a wide variety of sources – painted and printed Indian maps produced in the sub-continent, including original manuscript representations. The journey commences with Hindu and Jain cosmological representations, to scrolls depicting sacred rivers and pilgrimage sites and ultimately to the cartographic depictions of ancient European conception of the Indian subcontinent.

The exhibition continues with the first vaguely accurate maps of India done in the wake of Vasco da Gama's arrival in 1498, documents the evolution of map making as part of the military contestation for supremacy by various European powers and ultimately the cartographic consolidation of India through the map of the British Raj.



Map of Pondicherry, 1741

The historical cartography of India charts a progressive quest for the accurate physical depictions of the subcontinent. This journey was channelled by the particular priorities, limitations, experiences and cultural biases of the map makers. Many maps fundamentally reflect a Europeans' view of India, and not necessarily India as it truly existed.

The final stage in the exhibition features unique images that bear witness to the birth of the modern Indian city. One travels from medieval Hyderabad and Bangalore to French Pondicherry to fascinating plans of the future metropolises of Mumbai, Kolkata and Delhi.

Cosmography and Cartography seeks to kindle greater interest and understanding into in India's incomparable spiritual visual culture. It also seeks to enlighten Indian history through the prism of several of the world's most impressive and ingenious monuments of cartography.
