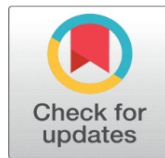


TYPOGRAPHY AND CULTURE: INDIAN SCRIPTS AS VISUAL AND ARTISTIC HERITAGE

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ABSTRACT

The research paper describes how Indian scripts are not merely utilized to write and communicate but they were also a significant element in our culture, and art. Writing in India has been related to religion, traditions and creativity. Language and spirituality have a strong connection since the origin of drawing and symbols to the correct scripts. Examples of such scripts include Brahmi, Devanagari, Tamil and Bengali which evolved over a long period of years. Their forms and designs are determined by the location, the materials, and culture at the particular moment. Each of the scripts appears to be different and symbolizes the identity of a specific area. The paper further demonstrates how in the past writing was regarded as something sacred. Individuals thought that letter writing was a religious and disciplined action. These scriptures have design guidelines such as balance, rhythm and flow and hence are beautiful in addition to being easy to read. Letters are not words only, but also appear to be works of art. The traditional styles began to become lost with the printing and digital technology. However, modern amenities are also assisting designers to revive those old styles in new forms. The Indian scripts are applied today in design and advertisement as an expression of culture and feelings. In general, the Indian scripts continue to evolve over time that continues to be of great cultural importance.

Keywords: Indian Scripts, Typography, Visual Culture, Cultural Heritage, Brahmi Script, Calligraphy Tradition, Graphic Design

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF INDIAN SCRIPTS

Spoken language was first used by humans as a way of expression of thoughts and feelings.

Nevertheless, with the evolution of civilization, people experienced the desire to retain their ideas and share them with others. This is the reason why humanity started the process of writing in terms of pictures and symbols, which resulted in the creation of scripts. A script is basically a collection of signs that represents the written language of a language. That is to say that a script is a writing medium. In any society, scripts were created in some way and became a relevant mode of human development. Thus, it can be stated that a script is a stable ground and a platform of language that preserves and passes the ideas between generations. (Yadav, 2018:313).

Early civilizations also tended to hold that scripts were a divinely inspired gift such as: Thoth, in Egypt, Nebu, in Mesopotamia, Wenchang, in China, and Brahma, in India. That means that scripts were not a restrictive medium of communication but also a component of religious and cultural faith. Scientific analysis of scripts started in the 18th century. Deciphering was done by Grotefend of the cuneiform of Mesopotamia, by Champollion of the Egyptian hieroglyphics and by James Prinsep of the secrets of the Brahmi script in India. These findings established ancient scripts as being very important in the progress of civilization, history, culture and language (Mishra, 2002:14-15).

Typography is a very important factor in defining the visual perception of language and its cultural interpretation. It does not only affect readability but also emotion, meaning, and identity. In all civilizations, scripts have served as cultural, belief and intellectual identifiers. Whereas Western typography typically focuses on uniformity, alignment and efficiency of communication process, Indian typography is characterized by more complex relationship between text and spirituality as well as between text and expression. Writing in India has always been more of a religious and aesthetic process and not a functional process. There are also a tremendous variety of languages and scripts in India including Devanagari, Brahmi, Tamil, Bengali, Gurmukhi, Gujarati, Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam, Odia and Urdu. The scripts have a distinct visual pulse and structural personality through geographical, linguistic, material, and historical influences. All these scripts are not the same visual systems; they represent the aesthetics and the cultural philosophies of the region. The Indian scripts have been used artistically in the form of manuscripts, inscriptions in temples, miniature paintings, textiles, coins, architecture, folk art and modern graphic design. Indian typography cannot be disconnected with cultural memory. Writings pass on knowledge between generations as well as repository of shared identity. They represent the notion of sound, space, rhythm, and form as perceived by societies. This research paper will concentrate on the visual and artistic heritage of the Indian scripts using typography and culture as the tools. It examines the role of scripts as mediums of tradition, identity and creativity and how these scripts are still being transformed in the contemporary world whilst grappling with the forces of globalization and computerized standardization.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To understand how Indian scripts developed and changed over time.
- To study Indian scripts as a form of visual art and cultural heritage.
- To see how typography helps protect and continue cultural identity.
- To understand the influence of Indian scripts in contemporary design and visual culture.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Patil (2022) discusses the *digitalization of Indian typefaces during the period of Digital India*. The trend as revealed in the research is that Indian scripts are abandoning the traditional writing and printing and moving towards the digital world. Font designing software and typing systems are some of the tools that help Devanagari. Unicode makes these scripts to be easily read and used on both the phones and the computers. More digital fonts are yet to be used.

In their book *A History of Typography*, Sabir and Chopra (2017) the society members in the past used crude drawings and symbols to communicate with one another which slowly developed into writing and typography Johannes Gutenberg invented a printing press that enabled printing to become faster and easier next came letter forms of all sorts even today typography is developing with new technology and new design concepts

Lakhi, Shreya and Shahid, M. (2021) In "*Understanding the Development in Indian Calligraphy with Focus on Devanagari*," explain that Indian calligraphy evolved from Brahmi to modern Devanagari. Writing tools such as stylus, bamboo pens, and later mechanical pens influenced the shape, style, and structure of letters. The study also highlights those cultural traditions and prominent calligraphers played a key role in preserving and promoting Devanagari calligraphy

Yadav n s 2016 states that type matter is crucial since the written text itself conveys the message to the reader in his book released by Rajasthan Hindi Granth academy, he points out that Johannes Gutenbergs invention of moveable type printing marked the beginning of typographic progress he says that many typographic components such as letter size style and spacing combine to convey information in an understandable appealing and efficient manner.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Both qualitative and quantitative methods as well as analytical and descriptive approaches will be used in this study in order to understand the background and theoretical aspects of the subject an initial survey of the literature will be conducted the study will then examine the structural distinctions between traditional handwritten texts and digital fonts surveys and interviews with calligraphers typographers font designers and ordinary users will be carried out in order to comprehend the effects of digital typography along with digital tools the study will also look for all typeface distortions lastly the gathered data will be analysed using basic statistical techniques to bolster and validate the study's conclusions

Secondary Data

Secondary data refers to information that has already been collected and documented by other researchers or institutions. This data is used as reference material to support and contextualize the present research. Books, research papers, journals, thesis, reports, newspapers, magazines, archival documents, online databases.

5. CONCEPT OF TYPOGRAPHY AND VISUAL CULTURE

Typography is writing and typography is art since the scripts were handwritten in India on tree bark and palm leaves with letter forms that resembled stones every script, they registered appeared to be unique text and design coexist in a seamless way with a sense of harmony beauty culture and meaning that is intrinsically connected to the visual soul of India

6. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF INDIAN SCRIPTS

6.1. INDUS VALLEY SCRIPT

The Indus Valley Civilization provides information regarding the Indian scripts. In the process of excavating this civilization, copper plates, seals, painted pottery, and many other such materials were found on which were drawn pictures and symbols. These signs show that there was a developed script in this civilization. Historians disagree on the identity of the inhabitants of the Indus Valley Civilization and their origin. Puvlekar and Ramachandran consider that Vedic Aryans should be credited with the credit of the Indus Civilization. Some researchers believe that they were Dravidians, others that they were Aryans, and other researchers believe that the Indus Civilization was the descendant of the Sumerian Civilization. In the same way, researchers have various opinions on the writing of the Indus Civilization.

The pictographic characters of this civilization are similar to the Sumerian script, Egyptian script and the script of the Easter Island yet this was a different script to the existing Sumerian cuneiform script. But as in all other scripts of that time, it was a pictographic script. It was perhaps a combination of phonetic and ideographic writing. This script has been recognized to have approximately 400 signs. This script has been claimed to have been read by some scholars and to this day it is yet to be completely deciphered. It is assumed that the last time of this writing was approximately in 1500 BCE.

According to scholars the views about this script are as follows:

- According to Swami Shankaranand the culture of the region was Vedic and not the nomadic Aryans. The Vedas were written by priestly scholars and the script of this area became the parent script of the other scripts of the Western Asian countries.
- Father H. Heras assumes that the inhabitants of the Indus Civilization were Dravidians and their language was also Dravidian. This civilization was destroyed by the Aryans in 1500 BCE and the script since then became extinct. In his view, the death of the Indus script occurred circa 1500 BCE and since then, India had gone through a dark age of script until circa 400 BCE. (Yadav, 2018:321).

6.2. BRAHMI: THE MOTHER SCRIPT (500 BCE TO 350 BCE)

Brahmi is regarded as the oldest script of the world and has been going on since the Vedic time. Vedic literature, Puranic literature and Indian culture records have been made through this script. The evidence of this script can be traced as early as the Ashokan period. The script during this era is Brahmi. The Indus script and the Brahmi script have been attempted to be directly related to each other; however, scholars have varying views of the relationship. Stevenson claims that the Brahmi script came to be because of the Phoenician and Egyptian scripts. Wilson however continues to uphold that the Brahmi evolved out of the Greek and Phoenician scripts. Conversely, other scholars like Edward Thomas, Lassen and Dawson suggest that the Brahmi script evolved in India. According to some scholars, Brahmins came up with this script by believing that it was a gift of God which was given by Brahma. The others indicate that in the latter stage of the Indus valley civilization when the script became more phonetic and alphabetic, it slowly transformed itself into the Brahmi script. Some other theorists also suggest that Brahmi was based on the linear pictographs of Sumerian and others that it was based on the Phoenician writing. Some scholars propose that it was derived out of the Greek scripts, but some say that the script of the Indus Valley Civilization was developed to the Brahmi script. All these are the views that make it difficult to trace the precise origin of Brahmi.

One should also remember that there is not a single script in the world which evolved in complete isolation without any impact of other systems of writing. Hence it can be justifiably inferred that Brahmi script developed as a hybrid of the Phoenician script, the Indus Valley script and the Aramaic script. A scientifically organized and systematic script could not have sprung up out of the blue. The perfect character it had made it the ancestor of many Indian and South east Asian scripts. The inscriptions of Emperor Ashoka contain authentic and well-established evidence of the Brahmi script. These are some of the earliest attested specimens of this script written in Brahmi. C.257 BCE Emperor Ashoka commissioned his fourteen major edicts inscribed in the Brahmi script on the Junagadh (Gujarat) or Giran rock inscription. The text is on the front side and the back one has one of the earliest Sanskrit inscriptions. The Brahmi script was transformed over time into a hugely different form. It was referred to as Southern Brahmi in South India and gave rise to a number of regional scripts such as Tamil, Grantha, Kannada and Telugu. Another pillar that was inscribed in the reign of the Emperor Ashoka also provides further evidences of the development of Brahmi. Later, the inscriptions in Brahmi were again inscribed on the same pillar in the second century. Emperor Chandragupta II (375-414 CE) later carved an inscription in appreciation of his father. Another ruler afterward added this pillar and eventually in the year 1605 CE, Emperor Jahangir added several inscriptions to it which shows the long history and importance of the place. (Yadav, 2018:321-324).

6.3. EVOLUTION INTO REGIONAL SCRIPTS

Being spread over the Indian sub-continent, Brahmi developed into other regional scripts because of geographical distance, linguistic diversity, and cultural impacts. Devanagari, Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, Bengali and Odia scripts came to acquire a visual identity. Both scripts were modified to the phonetic needs of their respective languages, and were related to their ancient counterparts. Such a visual coherence, as in the words, and a rhythmic movement through the text were the achievements of Devanagari, who at least pioneered the horizontal headline called the Shiro Rekha. South Indian scripts such as Tamil and Malayalam, on the other hand, developed rounded forms which place more emphasis on fluidity and continuity. These differences depict that the Indian scripts are living systems that are influenced by their practical values as well as their aestheticism.

1) CALLIGRAPHY AND MANUSCRIPT TRADITIONS

Manuscript traditions were important in the preservation of the Indian scripts as art forms. Scribes carefully copied religious writings including the Vedas, Upanishads, Jain Agamas, Buddhist sutras and medieval bhakti poetry. The margins of these manuscripts were frequently decorated, and the letters were also illuminated, and symbolic motives made them more beautiful. Calligraphy in India was not a mere way of displaying beauty, but a way of worship and discipline. The accuracy and the elegance of typography was regarded as the manifestations of inner purity and spiritual concentration. Therefore, typography became a form of sacred art through calligraphy.

2) Indian Scripts as Artistic Expression

Indian Scripts as Artistic Expression implies that the writing systems in India do not serve as the means of communication, but also serve as a visual art, which expresses the cultural beauty, creativity, and identity. Devanagari

and Tamil script, Bengali script and Gurmukhi Indian scripts are shaped, curved, and lined in a manner that they form visual harmony.



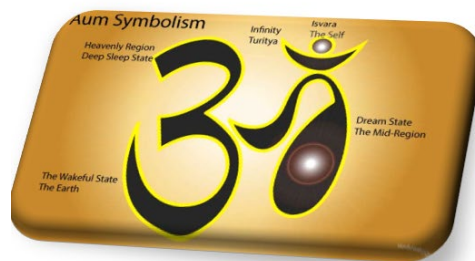
They are both artistic and linguistic since these scripts are used in calligraphy, inscribed on the walls of temples, in manuscripts, paintings, logic design, and contemporary typography.

3) Aesthetic Principles in Indian Scripts

The Indian scripts are governed by aesthetic rules like proportion, rhythm, symmetric, and flowing. Letters are meant to produce visual harmony and attention is paid to spacing and variations of strokes. The similarity of curves and lines in words creates an impression of motion which is sometimes referred to as visual rhythm. The Indian typography has depth and character added by the balance of thick and thin strokes. This elastic quality enables scripts to be readable and also to be used as visual designs, hence suitable as artistic and decorative items.

4) Symbolism and Spiritual Meaning

There are a lot of Indian scripts that are full of spiritualism. Writing is closely related to the notion of Shabda (sacred sound) that is supposed to be one of the primary norms of creation. Some Hinduity syllables, including Om, are regarded as a universal cosmic vibration. This religious aspect makes typography more than communication. Letters are considered to be a manifestation of the divine energy and the visual appearance of the letter is thought to have an effect on the spiritual experience. Typography is used as a sacred visual language in this belief in yantras, mantras and inscriptions on rituals.



5) Scripts in Traditional Arts

In the traditional arts of India, script is evident in temples and as well as in murals, folk paintings and clothing. The inscriptions on temples are textual and sculptural, and merge well with the architecture. Handwritten script is commonly used to supplement imagery in folk art such as Madhubani and Kalighat painting to give it a narrative and symbolic dimension. Such activities illustrate the role of scripts as a part of visual culture as opposed to individual linguistic instruments.



6) Typography, Identity, and Culture

The scripts are very critical in developing culture and regional identity. Language and script serve as a sign of belonging, legacy and continuation. The visual aspect of a script is enough to associate people with their cultural background and their memory. Typography is also a matter of social values and historical backgrounds. Authority and permanence were stressed in royal inscriptions and clarity and reverence in texts devoted to Gods. Technology of printing that was introduced during the colonial period standardized the letterforms and disaggregated the native traditions of calligraphy.

Typography, in India, is a significant aspect of emotional and political interactions because of the script-based identity movements. The cultural pride and resistance against homogenization are commonly linked to the conservation and advancement of local scripts.



7) Impact of Printing and Modern Typography

Printing and modern typography have changed our everyday life in terms of reading, learning, and understanding the information. Before, books were to be handwritten and this was extremely expensive and time consuming. With the invention of the printing press books, newspapers and magazines could be printed in large volumes. This helped in making education accessible to the masses at a low cost. More people could now read and write and information started spreading like wildfire. Benchmarking was also done through printing to pass the news and ideas. Newspapers informed people the happenings in the world. Study material in print became easily accessible and this also resulted in the expansion of schools, colleges and also libraries. The modern typography entails the design and style of letters. Letters are not only read today but they are made pretty.



The fonts, sizes and styles make the text clear and interesting. As an example, the headings are boldly typed and plain fonts are used in reading easily. Typography plays an important role in advertisement and branding. Typography makes people to listen to the advertisements, read messages quickly and store brands in their memory. The font content in posters, banners, social media, and websites is also right which improves the information. Typography is now computerized and the use of mobile phones has been put in use. The screens, the applications, the websites, the online advertisements, are covered with texts. The designers can easily make manipulations with colours, shapes and styles to achieve the engagement of the content. Concisely, printing and modern typography has made communication faster, much understandable and attractive. They help the people learn better and formulate messages easier and read print and electronic materials readily.

8) Transition from Manuscript to Print

The transition between manuscript and print occurred in two phases, the first in the late 13th century and the second in the 16th century. The process of change between manuscript and print happened in two stages, the first one during the end of the 13th century and the second one during the 16th century.

The printing technology was introduced in India and revolutionized typography. This is not to say that the complex forms of Indian scripts were not also limited by print, though print made mass communication and literacy possible. The early forms were struggling to replicate the fluidity and delicacy of the handwritten forms. In this, certain aesthetic qualities were being sacrificed in case of mechanical reproduction. Nonetheless, the print culture also expanded the space of the Indian languages and scripts that contributed to spreading culture.

9) Revival and Adaptation

Designers and theoreticians have been trying to recuperate classical style in typography of the current day and this has taken place over the past several decades. The new potentials of the digital fonts allow complex ligatures, situational forms and script particularities. The digital typography has offered novel possibilities of preserving the cultural aspect of the Indian scripts and modifying them to suit the current usage. This revival is a signifier of the growing knowledge of typography as culture.

10) Indian Graphic in Design and Advertising

A significant one is the use of Indian scripts in graphic design and advertisement because it is about language, culture, and the visual image. The Indian variety of scripts is enormous: Devanagari, Tamil, Bengali, Telugu, Gujarati, Gurmukhi, Malayalam and Urdu, and each of the scripts has its history and looks. The scripts can also be applied in the communication of the graphic designing field and advertising by using them as powerful visual effects which make designs have meaning, identity and emotion.

One of the most important facets of advertisement that should be used to reach the audience is language, and Indian scripts help the brands to communicate in a well-known and culturally-based manner. The perception of trust, belonging, and relatability amongst the local populations will be created at the very moment of the advertisements in local scripts. To give an example, an advertisement in Devanagari or Tamil scripts can be more intimate and authentic with the consumers of the region than a design, which relies on it. only on English typography. It is this cultural proximity which renders Indian scripts highly possible in print ads, hoardings, labels and digital media.



The Indian scripts are a rich opportunity aesthetically as far as graphic designing is concerned. The forms to the design with the curvy shapes, rhythmic and calligraphic traditions strokes provide the designers with the unique visual structure. The designers are also predisposed to experimenting with the traditional calligraphy, hand writing and the modern digital typography to be able to create the original layouts. In order to reconcile the traditional and the modern, Indian scripts are typically stylized in logos, brand identities, movie posters and festival advertisements, in addition to social media campaigns. Such scripts are visually beautiful and enhance the interest of design and advert more memorable. The Indian scripts are also crucial in conserving the cultural heritage through the use of modern design. The use of traditional script in the advertisement helps designers to save their heritage of the living language and artistic traditions. The strategy is commonly employed in the campaigns of festivals, handicrafts, handloom products, Ayurveda, organic food brands, government awareness campaigns. Some of the features of such designs that have appeal to the national and international audiences include realism, originality, and appreciation of the culture. Contrary to this, technology has increased the use of the Indian scripts even more in the digital era. The Unicode fonts, regional language keyboards and design programs have allowed designers to easily use the Indian scripts in the websites, mobile applications, and social media platforms. As the digital marketing has been on the rise, the use of regional scripts by brands also increased in order to reach various audiences in India. This has been demonstrated by the trend that appreciates the Indian scripts in the non-exclusive communication and effective advertisement strategies.



In conclusion, the Indian scripts are very important in the graphic design and the advertisement since it uses aesthetics graphics and the culture. Emotional attachment is enhanced by the fact that they are utilised. aestheticism, and encourages cultural preservation.



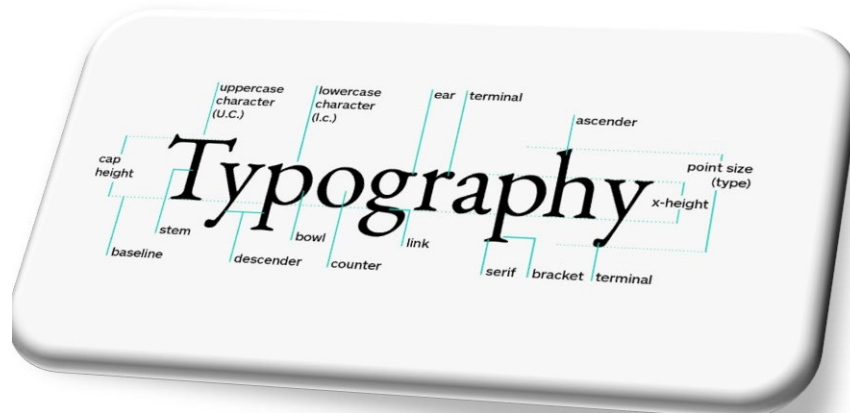
A combination of the creative genius of integrating Indian writings into modern design techniques, advertisers and designers will be in a position to design a powerful and meaningful and culturally rich visual communication that can attract the attention of a huge mass of people.

11) Digital Age and Contemporary Practices

The digital era has transformed the practices of typography throughout the world. The use of different scripts in digital applications has been made easy by introduction of Unicode standards in India. In animation, web and interactive media, artists and designers experiment with typography. The modern typography is made up of both traditional and new. Indian scripts are versatile exhibited through calligraphy-driven fonts, experimental designs and the multilingual design. A storytelling tool in the globalized world is typography that can make the local heritage to be connected with the global audience.

12) Problems with the Typographic Heritage

Despite the interest, there are still some problems in the preservation of Indian typographic heritage. These include lack of documentation, lack of typographical training, lack of financing and use of English typography in the web world. The majority of less popular scripts and calligraphic traditions are almost facing extinction. The cultural institutions, educators and the designers must strive to preserve and spread Indian scripts. Research, exhibitions, Web-based repositories and curriculum development may come in handy in preserving and revival of this heritage.



7. CONCLUSION

The Indian scripts are not a functional writing system only, as it is also a visual culture, a form of artistic expression as well as a form of cultural expression. Historically, the typography in India has been related closely to the spirituality, philosophy and aesthetics, which impact on how scripts are created as a symbolic and visual representation. It has been demonstrated that the Indian scripts evolved because of the linguistic needs and material culture and obtained the characteristic visual qualities, e.g. rhythm, balance and fluidity. Literacy and standardization were promoted by the printing technique, although, of course, the expressive depth of writing traditions was reduced. The Indian scripts are being preserved and adapted in the digital era with the assistance of Unicode and intricate typographic software. Whatever the challenges such as poor documentation and dominance of the English typeface, Indian scripts remained vivid cultural systems that should be explored and engaged by artists.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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