

TYPOGRAPHY ENVIRONMENT OF ORISSA IN CULTURAL CONTEXT – AN INSIGHT AND VISUAL PERCEPTION

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ABSTRACT:

By fact of Ethnologies, there are 6,912 numbers of languages worldwide and out of that there is list of 415 'living languages' used alone in India. Although all of them do not have writing system and some of them use modified forms of existing writing systems. There are fourteen basic scripts seen in world. These are: 1.Latin, 2.Georgian, 3.Arabic, 4.Hebrew, 5.Cyrillic, 6.Greek, 7.Armenian, 8.Indian, 9.Syrian, 10.Japanese, 11.Korean, 12.Ethiopian, 13.Chinese, 14.Mongolian. Within them there are many subcategorized scripts. Therefore, we have thousands numbers of writing styles or typefaces in the world. As the future design educators we insist to know different typefaces as many as we can in terms of their vernacular and cultural influences. In the process of having many conferences and seminars, we would be able to exchanging and sharing each other with our dialect design forms and get some valuable inspirations.

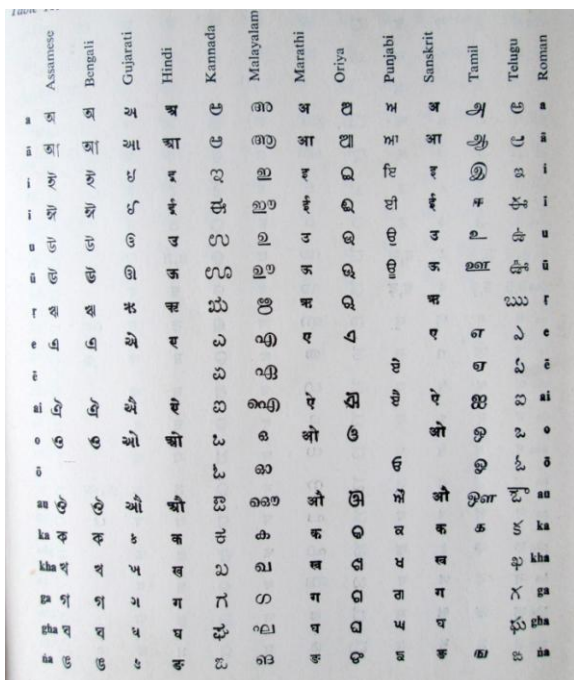


Fig 1: Modern Indian scripts including Roman.

Since my root is based in Orissa, India, so I have to bring out to the world audience some notable aspects from Orissan (Oriya) script - one of Indian writing systems as it is part my research process. The Spectrum of Indian Typography is very vast ranging from Devnagari to various regional scripts. When we talk about Orissan Typography in particular as one of Indian scripts especially in outdoor context, it becomes an asset to the Orissan culture, by embracing lot of layers & forms of decorative values, motives and various folk forms of its rich cultural and political backgrounds



Fig 2: A glance of Orissan culture.

Oriya (Orissan) culture is very wide in terms of its variety, starting from Odissi Dance to Temple sculptures & motives, Palm leaf manuscripts with engraved miniature illustrations to PataChitra, Puri Car-festival, Pipili Appliqué works to Silver filigree works and surprisingly some typical Orissan fast food culture. Eventually it is endless. Here I am trying to reflect on those various native influences in traditional street Typography of Orissa as the connotative visual-verbal messages.

As we all know, type form has a strong link with visuals as it is derived from visuals itself. In contemporary scene due to urgencies of the readability and reproducibility it is become more abstract, symbolic, simplicity and technical. The human touch is missing in terms of natural aesthetic and expressive

value. This aesthetic value may consist of cultural and environmental reflections. As part of my academic research, I came across a lot of environment typographical element reflecting the vernacular visual language associated with deep cultural base. Evidence shows Oriya script consists of rounded shapes quite similar to south Indian counter parts. That is because of the ancient Orissan writing process was being scratched on palm-leave manuscripts by means of a sharp stylus. Practically it was easier to write rounded strokes as there was risk of tearing the leave in case of straight strokes. In linguistic aspect, it has much similarity with other northern Indian languages like Hindi, Bengali and Gujarati. On closure look, you can find the upper part without shiro-rekha (Horizontal line at top unlike Devnagri) with the curvilinear stroke similar like southern. But in bottom part it has similarity with Devnagri scripts. That 'curvilinear' or circular part would be my prime focus of my analysis in the presentation. Is there a practice on circular forms established in all forms of Oriya cultural, folk arts and crafts?



Fig 3: A glance of Orissan environmental typography.

Remarkably, in the outdoor and environmental scenario the Oriya typography looks different with lot of visual entities. My visual based presentation will focus also on these elements by analyzing how and where they derived from and which aspect of those cultural dominances forced the artisans and

craftsmen to produce such design forms. About the circular forms in particular which I have discovered is clearly a common visible element in entire Orissan culture associated in many ways. (Please see the Fig 4 – Fig 10)



Fig 4: Circular forms in Orissan Dance (Odissi).

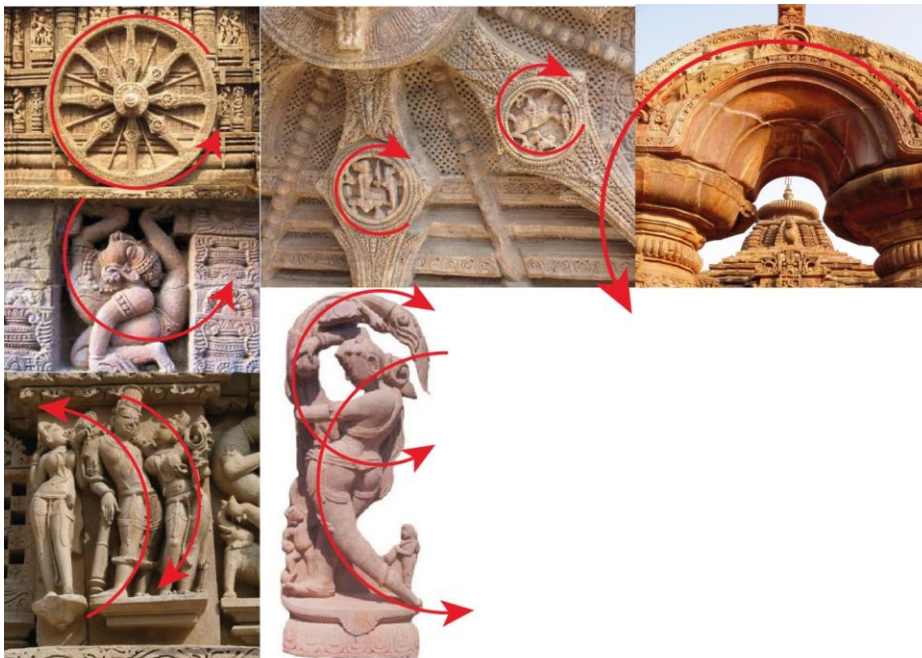


Fig 5: Circles in Orissan Sculptures.



The 'CIRCLE' is prominent form in Orissa's appliqué works also.

Fig 6: Circles strongly seen in Orissan 'Pipili Appliqué works' also.



It may be Pata chitra (Painting), Silver filigree work, Lord Jagannath or its Chariot, Everywhere the circle is most prominent figure.

Fig 7: Other major traditional art and craft forms.

The state Orissa is missing proper design education and as a result the excessive advent of digital media controls the present situation of Orissan Typography particularly in outdoor context. The Typography Environment is going in an unethical direction by losing its traditional decorative values and ingenuity. There is urgency among type design academicians to intervene the issue by confronting with a task



Fig 8: Orissan traditional popular Foods.



Fig 9: Traditional costumes and jewelry of Orissan people with circular elements

where, they have to indicate the fundamental understanding and knowledge of its cultural connections. One leading question will be: how is it possible to convey knowledge about aesthetic principles of this environmental typo form in a vernacular backdrop without knowing a language?

The core area of my visual facts based presentation will emphasize the association of rich aesthetic, heritage, visual perception and cultural



Fig 10: The Orissan script is strongly based on Circular structure. Is it the cultural reflection?

understanding with the Orissan environmental and outdoor typography which is now on helm of negligence and under cover with respect from the scope of future design education. The presentation and paper is based on one ongoing academic research project and shows the attempt of investigating the relation between visual and verbal aspects of such traditional expressive writing systems in certain environments.

The young designers should know these various cultural aspects reflecting on Typography from this cultural territory and subsequently their possible implementations in future Type Designing. Traditional Indian typography especially outdoor environments are purely visual perspective created by typical roadside signboard painters. In west, design emerged as a response to industry and mass production. But in India, there has always been a direct link between design and art. They feel Design is all about decorativeness. That is an evident clearly visible in the approach to typography which sees the 'character' as an 'image'. It has really a great value in education which we cannot ignore to know much about the root.

କ	କ୍	କ୍ତ	କ୍ର	କ୍ଳ	କ୍ଷ	କ୍ଷ୍ଣ	କ୍ସ	କ୍ଦ	କ୍ଦ୍ଧ
kka	kṛa	kṛta	kṛa	kṛḷa	kṛṣa	kṛṣṇa	kṛsa	kṛda	kṛdha
ଂ	ଂକ୍	ଂକ୍ତ	ଂକ୍ର	ଂକ୍ଳ	ଂକ୍ଷ	ଂକ୍ଷ୍ଣ	ଂକ୍ସ	ଂକ୍ଦ	ଂକ୍ଦ୍ଧ
ṅka	ṅkṛa	ṅkṛta	ṅkṛa	ṅkṛḷa	ṅkṛṣa	ṅkṛṣṇa	ṅkṛsa	ṅkṛda	ṅkṛdha
ଞ	ଞକ୍	ଞକ୍ତ	ଞକ୍ର	ଞକ୍ଳ	ଞକ୍ଷ	ଞକ୍ଷ୍ଣ	ଞକ୍ସ	ଞକ୍ଦ	ଞକ୍ଦ୍ଧ
jña	jñṛa	jñṛta	jñṛa	jñṛḷa	jñṛṣa	jñṛṣṇa	jñṛsa	jñṛda	jñṛdha
ଟ	ଟକ୍	ଟକ୍ତ	ଟକ୍ର	ଟକ୍ଳ	ଟକ୍ଷ	ଟକ୍ଷ୍ଣ	ଟକ୍ସ	ଟକ୍ଦ	ଟକ୍ଦ୍ଧ
ṭḍa	ṭṭṛa	ṭṭṛta	ṭṭṛa	ṭṭṛḷa	ṭṭṛṣa	ṭṭṛṣṇa	ṭṭṛsa	ṭṭṛda	ṭṭṛdha
ଠ	ଠକ୍	ଠକ୍ତ	ଠକ୍ର	ଠକ୍ଳ	ଠକ୍ଷ	ଠକ୍ଷ୍ଣ	ଠକ୍ସ	ଠକ୍ଦ	ଠକ୍ଦ୍ଧ
ṭṭa	ṭṭṛa	ṭṭṛta	ṭṭṛa	ṭṭṛḷa	ṭṭṛṣa	ṭṭṛṣṇa	ṭṭṛsa	ṭṭṛda	ṭṭṛdha
ଡ	ଡକ୍	ଡକ୍ତ	ଡକ୍ର	ଡକ୍ଳ	ଡକ୍ଷ	ଡକ୍ଷ୍ଣ	ଡକ୍ସ	ଡକ୍ଦ	ଡକ୍ଦ୍ଧ
ṇḍa	ṇṇṛa	ṇṇṛta	ṇṇṛa	ṇṇṛḷa	ṇṇṛṣa	ṇṇṛṣṇa	ṇṇṛsa	ṇṇṛda	ṇṇṛdha
ଣ	ଣକ୍	ଣକ୍ତ	ଣକ୍ର	ଣକ୍ଳ	ଣକ୍ଷ	ଣକ୍ଷ୍ଣ	ଣକ୍ସ	ଣକ୍ଦ	ଣକ୍ଦ୍ଧ
ṅṇa	ṅṅṛa	ṅṅṛta	ṅṅṛa	ṅṅṛḷa	ṅṅṛṣa	ṅṅṛṣṇa	ṅṅṛsa	ṅṅṛda	ṅṅṛdha
ତ	ତକ୍	ତକ୍ତ	ତକ୍ର	ତକ୍ଳ	ତକ୍ଷ	ତକ୍ଷ୍ଣ	ତକ୍ସ	ତକ୍ଦ	ତକ୍ଦ୍ଧ
ṭṭa	ṭṭṛa	ṭṭṛta	ṭṭṛa	ṭṭṛḷa	ṭṭṛṣa	ṭṭṛṣṇa	ṭṭṛsa	ṭṭṛda	ṭṭṛdha
ଥ	ଥକ୍	ଥକ୍ତ	ଥକ୍ର	ଥକ୍ଳ	ଥକ୍ଷ	ଥକ୍ଷ୍ଣ	ଥକ୍ସ	ଥକ୍ଦ	ଥକ୍ଦ୍ଧ
ṭṭa	ṭṭṛa	ṭṭṛta	ṭṭṛa	ṭṭṛḷa	ṭṭṛṣa	ṭṭṛṣṇa	ṭṭṛsa	ṭṭṛda	ṭṭṛdha
ଦ	ଦକ୍	ଦକ୍ତ	ଦକ୍ର	ଦକ୍ଳ	ଦକ୍ଷ	ଦକ୍ଷ୍ଣ	ଦକ୍ସ	ଦକ୍ଦ	ଦକ୍ଦ୍ଧ
ṭṭa	ṭṭṛa	ṭṭṛta	ṭṭṛa	ṭṭṛḷa	ṭṭṛṣa	ṭṭṛṣṇa	ṭṭṛsa	ṭṭṛda	ṭṭṛdha
ଧ	ଧକ୍	ଧକ୍ତ	ଧକ୍ର	ଧକ୍ଳ	ଧକ୍ଷ	ଧକ୍ଷ୍ଣ	ଧକ୍ସ	ଧକ୍ଦ	ଧକ୍ଦ୍ଧ
ṭṭa	ṭṭṛa	ṭṭṛta	ṭṭṛa	ṭṭṛḷa	ṭṭṛṣa	ṭṭṛṣṇa	ṭṭṛsa	ṭṭṛda	ṭṭṛdha
ନ	ନକ୍	ନକ୍ତ	ନକ୍ର	ନକ୍ଳ	ନକ୍ଷ	ନକ୍ଷ୍ଣ	ନକ୍ସ	ନକ୍ଦ	ନକ୍ଦ୍ଧ
ṭṭa	ṭṭṛa	ṭṭṛta	ṭṭṛa	ṭṭṛḷa	ṭṭṛṣa	ṭṭṛṣṇa	ṭṭṛsa	ṭṭṛda	ṭṭṛdha

Fig 11: Oriya fonts for Desktop publishing (Ref: Wikipedia.com).

The overtone and inspiration from Bollywood (Indian Film Industry) also has major role to deciding factors in designing cultural Typography in India. Each and every character of the typeface tells the story individually about a particular place or culture or a festival.

As we all know, Indian traditional public transport system carries a lot of Typographical elements, which has express cultural connection as well with embellished value to the vehicle. It could be Truck or Auto Rickshaw and horse-cart.

The real challenge for Design learners is to study their own tradition with its cultural diversifications and apply them with their works in various ways. Translating the foreign brands into the regional scripts could be one area of tasking with the regional cultural reflections and retaining the brand identity as well.

Each type character says a different story. My findings from the cultural reflection in Indian Typography would help young designers to take a new route around the world.

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