Identity, ethos and ethics: Questions on culture and type design

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तुका म्हणे होय मनासी संवाद। आपुलाचि वाद आपणांसी।।

Type is a tricky concept. On one hand graphic designers, typographers, type designers and others from this creed, valorise typefaces. They claim extra dimensions to it, suggesting that typefaces embed several expressible as well as inexpressible social attributes like tradition, nationality, culture, and ethos that go beyond mere visual perception of the outline, forms or the black and white spaces that make up a font. On the other hand we see thousands of typefaces being made, distributed and (happily) used by people, a majority of whom probably have no formal training in the visual arts, or any education or realizations about the histories, taxonomies, or schools of type and typography. So, what is it that makes a 'good' font? How do different sets of people select typefaces? There are no clear-cut answers to such questions, and part of the charm that the discipline of typography possesses lies in fact that there probably aren't any unanimous answers for these questions.

Part of the motivation to write this piece stems from the increasing amount of cross cultural typefaces being seen in the market today. Over the past year I was amazed at the large number of type designers we've had come across who've designed typefaces for Indian scripts. Besides Indians there are an increasing number of transnational designers who now have taken up designing fonts for Indian scripts.

Figure 1: Devanagari Typefaces inspired by Frutiger, Melior, Kabel and Eurostyle.

It is fascinating and equally perturbing to see how people 'view' and 'treat' typefaces from other cultures. Ideally an event that promotes the interaction and assimilation of different cultures needs to be celebrated, since civilizations have historically evolved greatly through such collaborations.

India specifically has benefitted, evolved and adapted itself to numerous cultures that did not have their origins in the subcontinent. Many Indian languages, religions, food, dance, clothing, music, architecture and other cultural dimensions are a product of the assimilation of multiple cultures from all over the world. Scripts and typography have themselves not been bereft of such evolutions;an early example of this is the Bihari style *(Khat-i-Bihari)* of Arabic calligraphy—a style which evolved in India and broke away from the orthodox rules set by Ibn Muqla using irregularity and colour to great effect. The incorporation of European punctuation into Indian scripts, and the use of Latin numerals in some South Indian scripts are all reminders of cultural assimilation. The case of Devanagari typography is no different; there are now Devanagari typefaces which have been inspired by popular Latin typefaces. Fonts that are inspired by or based upon—just to mention a few— Eurostyle, Melior, Kabel, Univers, Frutiger, Bodoni etc. have been openly available for several years. Their popularity in use, however, has not matched up to their Latin counterparts.

Conversely, there are very few Latin typefaces inspired by the scripts of India; whatever little inspiration exists also seems very plastic. Typefaces worth mentioning here are Linotype Sansara, Modakshar BT, the pre-digital Shalimar revived as Samarkand; ITC Simran has some Devanagari influence to it. These fonts see very little usage in the mainstream publications and ephemera, their use seemingly restricted to aid in the depiction of an exotic India; for example, menu cards of Indian restaurants in western countries have unwittingly become one the most prolific users of such typefaces.

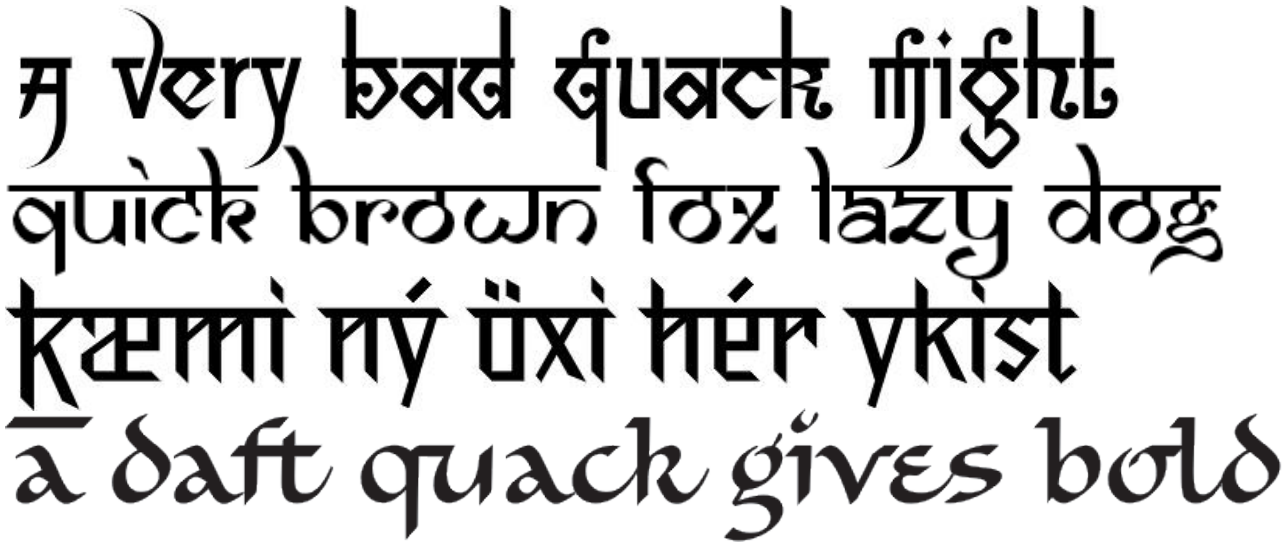

Figure 2: Latin typefaces inspired by traditioal Devanagari tools

The typography of any script has to keep looking for new sources of inspiration and in order to do so; type designers might take inspiration from different typographic traditions to extend their visual imagination and add to the existing variety. It is with these sentiments and hope that I looked forward to welcome some of the new Devanagari typefaces, created by individuals trained in alternative typographic cultures. Unfortunately for me, the results were visually disappointing, perhaps due to the lack of conceptual and cultural rigour. To me, most of the typefaces looked and 'felt' like soulless Frankensteinian monsters, created by stitching parts of disparate dead typefaces—created and then eventually abandoned by their creators themselves—they came across as strangers whom one couldn't converse with, because we couldn't find a common language. Some may feel that this is a harsh judgement, especially when one knows the arduous labours of type design, and perhaps this could even be a shortcoming on my behalf—a direct reaction of the intransigence of my own typographic tastes. I personally have been on the receiving end of such criticism when Guajarati and Bengali fonts laboriously created by me failed to impress the graphic designers of Gujarat and Bengal. The reasons given, at that time seemed astonishing and perplexing—my fonts did not contain the essential "Gujaritiness" and "Bengaliness" which the designers wanted. It is these judgements and reactions which lead to introspection; hence an attempt at articulation as to what was or is possibly lacking in fonts as well as the font design process.

To begin with, we must attempt to define what 'from a different typographic culture' means—this is a remarkably risky proposition—the effort is to make a case for diversity while at the same time not to be discriminatory. Some individuals have taken a parochial view of this, they interpret this as typefaces designed by 'non-natives[1]'. I am not so comfortable using this term—it creates an instant othering, and hence foretells the possibility of marginalization. It is the same discomfort or, more precisely, annoyance and anger that I feel when I see the term 'non-latin' being used in the context of Indian scripts. The danger in doing so is well known; when a social group creates 'the other' they in effect develop social, economic or psychological ways to exclude and possibly marginalize another group of individuals. Through this labelling of 'non-something or someone' they tend to highlight what is dissimilar or different in the representation/interpretation of others, which often manifests itself through stereotyping. It is a way of creating and safeguarding one's own positive status/identity through what is often relegation of the other. A self-affirmation of one's own identity at the cost of marginalizing other socio-economic-cultural groups is bound to be fraught with dangers of inimical conflicts and should be guarded against. Transliterating this to type design, more so to and against the term 'non-latin', reveals the hegemony of Latin script/typefaces. It leads us to a critical conceptual problem: rather than understanding or interpreting the typography of a script as a 'thing-in-itself'; type designers often consider Latin typefaces/Latin type usage systems as the basis for interpreting and developing typefaces for other scripts. This is methodologically propagated by designing the Latin typeface first and then 'deriving' a typeface for other scripts. Such a system is stiflingly insular, as the elements of a Latin typeface dictate the features of a structurally and culturally dissimilar script—here we can claim that the Latin script is in itself structurally inadequate to provide for the visual features of several Indian scripts and that it takes a significant imagination/interpretation on the

[1] For an interesting exploration of the term 'native' in anthropological discourse, please refer the first section of **Putting Hierarchy in Its Place**, by Arjun Appadurai in Cultural Anthropology Vol. 3, No. 1, Feb. 1988, pp. 36-49

part of the type designer to 'derive' such a typeface. Morphologically speaking, if we consider the case of Devanagari and Latin, it can be argued that there are similarities between the two scripts: अ उ with *3*, ठ with *O*, ड with *S*, व with *d* etc. But there are several features in Devanagari which are not found anywhere in Latin; the गाँठ (knot) in Devanagari, seen in letters such as द इ म ज्ञ is one such feature; for this reason it has to be invented/interpreted while 'deriving[2]' a Devanagari from Latin . When it comes to matching fonts, there are roughly two schools of thought. The first suggests that fonts need to be formally (visually) matched. The idea is to try and make them look similar by matching morphological elements used within them. This can be exceptionally tricky, and there are many issues that get resolved in an ad hoc manner. Take the example of designing matching a thick-thin Devanagari and Latin typeface. In comparison to Devanagari, Latin uses a reverse pen angle for its script, so most designers have to considerably change the angle of the pen while drawing letters for another script which consequently changes, amongst many things, the axis and general rhythm of the typeface.

Another approach to matching fonts is, not to match fonts visually—to treat them as 'things-in-itself' each faithful to its' own history and script tradition. The only matching to be done here is the font heights,to ensure a basic functional interoperability. Matching fonts provided by font vendors in India follow this policy. Some see this as amusing, blasphemous even—to find traditional right canted Devanagari typefaces being sold with Times New Roman or Helvetica clones as matching fonts. This approach—the development and use two distinct and separate styles— is seen in logo designs too, the logos of Emirates and Al-Jazeera for example do not try and match the English with Arabic, but separately use distinctively different styles, each highlighting their specific traditions.

The hegemony of the Latin script is also apparent in the development of typographic technology. Most of the early printing inventions, especially hot-metal typesetting machines were invented considering the typesetting requirements of the Latin script, which is, in most cases, typographically disconnected and structurally very unlike most Indian scripts. The typographic quality of connected Indian scripts suffered greatly in adapting themselves to these machines. The basic difference lies in the fact that orthographically phonetic and visually connected scripts had to be broken down into discreet glyph elements. A larger orthography than Latin meant, either more glyphs had to be accommodated in a limited (glyph/keyboard) space or glyphs had to be removed, leading the script to be modified and diverting it from its given structure. These technological limitations are in part also responsible for death of intricately connected scripts such as Modi. It is painful to realize that till today there have been very few instances where individuals and institutions have recognized the requirements of an indigenous script and then developed a technology for it,rather than force-fitting a script onto the available technology.

Coming back to defining this problematic concept of 'from another typographic culture'; we can suggest describing it as typefaces designed by individuals who were not '*adequately*[3]*'* educated in the use of the script and more importantly who do not consume the script on a regular basis. This definition includes Indians as well. A type designer wanting to design a Gujarati typeface can probably be considered

[2] This is a preliminary comment on the typographic similarities and dissimilarities between script systems. A detailed analysis on this issue, which considers larger parameters such as script complexity, stroke movement, stroke sequences etc. are presented in a forthcoming publication.

coming from a different typographic culture if s/he is educated in and consumes Devanagari or Tamil. A typical argument that can be made here is; "aren't Devanagari and Gujarati similar?" The response to this would be yes and no. The scripts do share similar formal features, but in our understanding, there is a significant diversity and distinctness in the traditionality within cultures of the scripts which requires a considerable amount of learning to discern. Here again, one could ask; "what is the culture and traditionality in the typography of a script?" One could probably define the culture and traditionality in the typography of a script as a semi-arranged set of intricate interactions embedded within a space and enacted through the use and consumption of the script. Pragmatically speaking, for type designers, it is essential to understand that members within a culture or identifying with a tradition will, by and large share preferences on earlier established visual shapes in typefaces. The crudest morphological implication of tradition/culture is the nature and amount of abstraction/modification that is permissible within the shape of letters, which is largely governed by the collective unconscious aesthetic of people who use and consume typefaces.

Existing history of typographic discourse and a large number of type designers have not satisfactorily understood, appreciated and identified cultural markers and their significance in typography; specifically, how formal elements within typefaces are encultured, and complimentarily, how culture is manifested through shapes and spaces within letters. It is critical to understand the development of a typeface as part of an environment, which is realized through a practice performed by a group of individuals. The development of a font—if intended to be used in a particular environment—must express or connect to existing relationships and interactions within an environment which is reinforced by an underlying ethos. Typefaces have to be therefore seen as inherently inseparable from the context of use within a setting—an environment which can at times possess an overwhelming cultural identity.

The risks of not understanding or being sensitive to another culture, and the possibility of creating 'others' are greater for 'western' type designers. These risks are exacerbated while theorizing or generating knowledge/artefacts. It is disconcerting to see how certain authors and typographical texts of western origin, view and analyse the typography of Indian scripts. Scripts, texts, typographies and cultures are presumptuously homogenised and frequent attempts have been made to present them as single, uniform monolithic entities. The presentation/assumption of scholarship and a significant portion of constructed knowledge in these texts seem to be arbitrary and imaginary in nature. This system of knowledge often disregards and devalues indigenous histories, theories and knowledge systems. When such knowledge created through such a system trickles down to, and interacts with local students and educators, it is seen or is presented as—due to a variety of sociopolitical reasons (primarily the global dominance of western scholarship)—an authoritative base for pedagogy. Through its disregard/devaluation of local systems, it finally and perhaps unconsciously attempts to brutally overwrite the local tacit knowledge systems.

In such a context it is pertinent to bear in mind the work done by postcolonial theorists. Edward Said in

[3] What construes as adequate education is bound to be a contentious issue. One end of the spectrum could argue that an awareness of basic characters is enough, while the other spectrum can argue that the type designer must be proficient in languages of the script so as to understand the context of use for the letters as well as tradition, culture and individuals who will use these typefaces.

his seminal work posits that we can only interpret the world through our own culture and the western world has continually tried to define in its own way what the 'orient' is. He defines orientalism as a

"… system of opportunities for making statements about the Orient. My whole point about this system is not that it is a misrepresentation of some Oriental essence— in which I do not for a moment believe— but that it operates as representations usually do, for a purpose, according to a tendency, in a specific historical, intellectual, and even economic setting"

The accusation he makes is, that a western author 'invents' the Orient as a homogenous system of knowledge, as a method of controlling or exerting authority over it. In doing so, he builds upon Foucault's proposition of creating/using knowledge as power, this is suggested through,

"… ideas, cultures, and histories cannot seriously be understood or studied without their force, or more precisely their configurations of power, also being studied. To believe that the Orient was created—or, as I call it, "Orientalized"—and to believe that such things happen simply as a necessity of the imagination, is to be disingenuous. The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony". (Said 1978)

As an addition to this, Said further suggests that "… Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand" and it is the possibility/character of this 'flexible positional superiority' that is at the root of creating the 'other'. Timothy Mitchell sums up features of this (Orientalist) political reality by saying,

"… [the orient] is understood as the product of unchanging racial or cultural essences; these essential characteristics are in each case the polar opposite of the West (passive rather than active, static rather than mobile, emotional rather than rational, chaotic rather than ordered); and the Oriental opposite or Other is, therefore, marked by a series of fundamental absences (of movement, reason, order, meaning and so on)." (Mitchell 1989)

There is also the insidious possibility of the type designer positioning himself as a design 'tourist'. 'The Tourist' is a concept suggested by Dean MacCannell; amongst the several concepts of touristic experiences, he writes,

"… The need to be post modern can thus be read as the same as the desire to be a tourist: both seek to empower modern culture and its conscience by neutralizing everything that might destroy it from within."

"… the tourist simply collects experiences of difference (different peoples, different places, etc.) he will emerge as a miniature clone of the old Western philosophical Subject, thinking itself unified, central, in control, universal etc. mastering otherness and profiting from it." (MacCannell 1976)

There is a need to examine the effects and implications of such sociopolitical realities, which have been observed, articulated and interpreted by several authors over the years. The hope is that type designers would in some sense undertake, execute and negotiate cross-cultural texts, type design projects and theories bearing in mind aforementioned equations of power and knowledge.

A case which might lend colour to such equations can be seen in the documented history of Devanagari

typography. Almost all of the early printing and the design of the initial typefaces in the Indian subcontinent was done by Europeans—driven largely by motives of proselytization and colonization. The technology and means of production was strictly controlled and was, for a long period under European administration. Besides cutting typefaces and making of books, a large portion of the typographic history was written by European missionaries. The interpretations of such a history or for that matter the history of any nation that has undergone a colonial experience is difficult and problematic. Historians have had to understand that in the pre-independence stage, there undeniably was a colonial construction of the history of the Indian subcontinent. This in some sense was very fruitful, as the colonizers documented and studied several aspects of daily life, albeit these studies were based on or were meant for the propagation of a certain colonial policy. It is after acknowledging these contributions; we have to start confronting problems. In the case of printing, some Indian historians have noted: while the Europeans were very meticulous in recording and eulogizing activities of their fellow European missionary printers, very few, if not any of the native Indian workers/printers were recorded or given credit to. It is difficult, almost impossible even, to construe a scenario where the development of so many Indian typefaces and the printing of many multilingual books were done without the substantial support of the local population. The missionary printers unarguably contributed significantly to the typography of Indian scripts, and whatever their intentions were— some of them went on to claim that they did this due to 'their love for India and its peoples', this 'intention of love' does not in any way suggest that they were 'fair' towards the natives. Knowing this, we also cannot remain shackled to our history; if we keep picking up old quarrels of history, then quite clearly the future is guaranteed to be full of unproductive strife.

In my recent interactions with transnational type designers who now have undertaken designing typefaces for Indian scripts; I found some of them to be unconsciously caught up in a complex maze of double standards. To give an example; it is paradoxical to see ritualistically trained type designers—who on one hand (are institutionally trained to) have the perspicacity to discern the finer details in Latin typography such as the difference between a hyphen and the minus sign or the subtleties of an ellipsis and three full-stops, even the difference between various tittles (the difference between the dot over j and the dot over i); on the other hand seem to have very little clue as to what or how the majority of the glyphs in a font for an Indian script were going to be used for. In the case of designers who had worked or were working on Devanagari typefaces, at no point did I find any suggestion that they had any genuine working knowledge of any major languages which use Devanagari—let alone of the nuanced yet palpable differences between numerous varieties of Devanagari. So the question to be asked here is, "can type design be divorced from its languages?" And "is it necessary that a type designer should know the language(s) for which the type is going to be used?" To what extent must a type designer be acquainted with the typographic culture of a script? especially when such a culture is unarticulated; and if one goes on to make a case for such a 'culture', what are appropriate methods to understand such cultures?

In the case of typography, how appropriate is it, to apply concepts of Latin font design, grids and book design to eastern script systems? Can there be a consensus on some basic terms and principles? In the current globalized context there are no simple answers to these questions. An argument encountered while addressing these questions is; "that type design and typography all over the world share the same language and hence a well-trained type designer/

typographer can adapt and use certain basic set of principles to accommodate the design of any script". Personally, propositions that claim to find the typographies of various scripts similar, deny the *sui generis* nature of a script. It seems far too generic and above all overly reductionistic to say all scripts share a basic language—such propositions are rendered ineffective especially when actual fonts need to be designed. On the basis of form, certainly scripts can share several visual elements: horizontals, verticals, ovals etc. and these shapes and contours do need to be treated in a manner which is perceptually conducive to the human eye; we do work on the same optical principles (illusions) while working with forms. Similarly, technical treatments that make a shape more legible for reproduction techniques, for example by treating a shape with ink traps are also in effect the same. The question to be asked here is: Can we call the basic shapes, the horizontals, verticals and ovals a language? Is a Latin oval the same as a Devanagari oval? If we are to use the analogy of spoken languages, several languages share similar sounds, but how similar are the actual languages, more importantly what can we learn or use from this similarity.

Besides the formal and structural attributes that the script/font embodies, a range of social attributes need to be looked into. One such seldom discussed and difficultly complex attribute is that of identity, which is closely interlinked with ethos and nationality. The effects of identity in fonts can be best illustrated with examples, the most notorious of which is "the Bormann decree" which suggested that Fraktur typefaces were 'Schwabacher-Jewish' letters and hence were banned and ordered to be replaced by Antiqua (Roman) script. A subtler example of this is Gill Sans when it became the iconic typeface of post-war design in England; in the same breath, after the Obama campaign, some have argued Gotham is coming close to being the Gill of America. This suggests that, there can be an invisible insistence on the nationality of a font while creating an identity for a brand. It is not surprising to hear stories from branding and advertisement professionals about British companies commissioning a British design firm to design a logo while insisting on using an 'English typeface' in its identity.

Such views are not bound by nationality; I have found similar attitudes here in India. During my doctoral study I encountered several designers who were very particular about using 'authentic Indian' typefaces as opposed to those designed outside India or by 'non-Indians'. The sentiments of these designers consciously resonate views on Desivad or 'Nativism'. Nativistic sentiment (ideas on western cultural hegemony) is strongly proposed in the Indian literary theory circles by Bhalchandra Nemade. When he speaks of the Marathi novel he says,

"The present generation must have an unfailing nativistic awareness that the novel in Marathi is a creation of Marathi writers, who, in turn, are the product of the Marathi society. Further, the formalistic, unintelligent practice of picking up all and sundry works of art from languages all over the world for a comparative assessment of works in Marathi—a tendency rife in our criticism—has to be avoided. It is dangerous for criticism to enter the comparative field without making an in-depth study of both the cultures compared. Culture is not a hot-house, but a soil-bound process; literature is not a theoretical construct but a living phenomenon." (Devy 2002)

A pertinent question in this line of thinking would be "is it appropriate here to use a literary theory in conjunction with a type design?" It can be argued, that since both literature and fonts are 'art objects' they can be treated on the same grounds. But in the context of a font, *what is authentic? And what is*

Indian?[4] Needs to be meticulously questioned. The point to be noted here is; typefaces like many others can be seen as nationalistic objects, they can through its creator, origins, propaganda or otherwise embody the culture that they are in—though probably not to the same extent as literature, which perhaps has a larger capacity to embody culture. Typography is also a manifestation of a regional or nationalistic tradition. This culture and tradition then becomes the backbone of design identity. It is in this environment of identity that individuals develop; it becomes the glue which binds individuals to create a social communities. The pursuit of an identity for an individual or for a community is an unremitting process; the motivation for this pursuit are perhaps beyond the rational, and in some sense represents one of the few human universal mental characteristics. The necessity of an identity probably stems out of a desire for permanence through a certainty of prior knowledge (a feeling of where we came from) which helps us conciliate innate anxieties of what the future might hold (assures us some control of where we are heading).

The question of an 'authentic Indian' typeface brings us into the area of ethics and more specifically to views on originality and ownership within fonts. This is especially challenging in the Indian context where notions of font ownership (both in personal and commercial sense) are unwieldy and inapplicable. Original font designers have been rarely noted, celebrated or acknowledged. Historically typefaces have been reproduced, copied or 'pirated' since the days of Nirnay Sagar Press. It was far too common for letterpress fonts to be reproduced by far away foundries using electrotyping or copper deposition techniques on the original letterpress fonts. One can think of several reasons to explain such circumstances. Firstly, the traditional notions of font ownership[5] in India. Secondly, the developmental-control of printing technology—the exorbitant economics of it in the context of Indian users. Besides these, the lack of awareness, laws etc. also play a part in exacerbating the problem. Originality in typefaces is not black and white[6]; it is sometimes hard to discern between fonts that have been 'plagiarised' as against the ones that are 'inspired by' or are 'interpretations' or 'historical revivals' or 'conscious parodies' of existing fonts. Then there is a question of how long should a person or a company hold the rights to a font? Can the designs be tied down a particular medium or for a specific amount of time?

Exceptionally strong economic forces influence most of the issues mentioned here. Type designers are under tremendous pressure these days from multinational companies to create typefaces that can be used across multiple countries where the company does business. Type foundries have hence developed a tendency for 'script-acquisitiveness', an urge to design more and more scripts to put in typeface, so that they can claim to provide for the marketing needs of multinational clients. This tendency and its gaudy exhibitionism displayed by type foundries can at times have an unnerving feel of colonial culture exhibitions. The Latin font design market already has a large number of typefaces and type foundries are now looking at eastern countries to make and sell fonts. I experienced this first hand, when I met a type designer who had

[4] There have been some discussions on such questions; one of the earlier and most well-known amongst these is the essay **"Is There an Indian Way of Thinking?"** by A.K. Ramanujan (1990).

[5] The simplistic argument given here is: a font is (seen to be) equivalent to the script, therefore how can any one person/company own the script? Everyone owns the script.

[6] A good introduction to this topic has been given by John Downer in **"Call It What It Is"** (Downer 2003)

had to design a font for a multinational in as many as twelve scripts! Six of them were from India. In my conversation with the designer, the designer said that they wanted to cover the whole of India. I could do little but remind himin jest, what the overwhelmingly generous Borges once wrote, "India is larger than the world".

What is assumed in the existing type design economy is that there is a market for fonts having larger and larger families—multiple weights, widths, styles, sizes and finally multiple scripts. Understandably such an enormous feat is not possible at the hands of a single type designer, which has led to a Tayloristic industrialization of the type design process. Designing for multinationals is seen as a vast source of financial profit. In this process a huge number of weights and widths are designed with the hope that they find use. Such development if indiscriminately done can dilute its sense of purpose. Furthermore such tendencies also have the potential to encourage a false sense of needs for graphic designers; claiming that designers need larger and larger sets of families for use. The expectation is that type designers should respond to such mechanical demands and slavishly create what is asked out of them without thinking about the use and needs of users, while at times not be in control of its longevity. Needless to say, there are many conceptual difficulties in taking up design projects these motivations. Primary amongst these is the fact that claiming multiple scripts look alike in a typeface might not be seen as natural and its unjustified weights and variations might not be seen as significantly usable. There is also the concern that such 'matching' exercises produce a disturbing homogeneity in the graphic design landscape whilst stifling the inherent typographic diversity of scripts.

The omission of the sociocultural and the alienation of its operator-users in the process of type design is a worrying trend; a terrible loss here is a certain flavour, an ineffable quality that really imparts typefaces their quintessence and staying power. In order for typography to evolve fruitfully in this age of global convergence, it is crucial that we realise the social sense of typography as against looking at it as just another industry. The forces exerted by the corporate demands of global capitalism are undoubtedly strong; to the extent that it funds, and hence dictates a significant amount of development in the domain of type design. But we have to equally acknowledge the sociocultural, which at times is ineffable and perhaps only communally perceivable. It is these fluid ambiguities between visible and invisible typography that are manifested through practice.

The theory of typography in these times should focus on questions related to the construction of cultural identity, through visible and invisible design. How social and communal identities in type design are created and disarticulated through various forces needs to be better understood and enunciated. There is a great need here to assemble a more acculturated, space-specific and people-sensitive view of typography and type design. A pertinent concern in doing this is the search for a methodology that is capable of analysing and more importantly utilizing cultural parameters in type design which investigates the claims of universality in type design and typography across cultures. Since, at the moment there exists no such clearly articulated method, there is also a subconscious hope that no unanimous methodology is developed; for, while there is a great need to articulate our reflections on culture, identity and its manifestations into type design, it would be reckless to think that such questions could be answered once and for all. It is very likely, that these theories/methodologies could themselves fluctuate from culture to culture, script to script and a generic totalizing theory would suppress

newer and alternative aesthetics in the field. It must be understood any theory/answers interpreted from whichever discourse are incidental—temporally and spatially bound to the authors' context.

Overall I am very optimistic about the developments in this field, not only with relation to the practical aspects of type design but also in theoretical developments. An increasing number of students as well as professionals have taken up cross-cultural multi-script type design projects; in the case of India, its' peoples will be willy-nilly exposed to cross-cultural typefaces. This is not the first time that they have been exposed to such typefaces. The earlier designs were perhaps economically motivated and hence relied heavily on traditional designs (were direct adaptations or technological-revivals) for their commercial success; it is the newer designs in which see a significant break from traditional forms. There is no doubt that this will bring about (and is bringing about) a new aesthetics into the field, but whether the designs will be accepted and to what extent they will succeed—what methods they will utilize in order to be accepted, only time will tell.

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