

PROJECT 201

Teaching Devanagari Calligraphy To Children

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GUIDE:

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**IDC, IIT BOMBAY
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APPROVAL SHEET

The Visual Communication Project II

Teaching Devanagari Calligraphy to Children

By Kanika Kaul

M.Des Visual Communication 2014-2016

is approved as a partial fulfilment of requirements of a post graduate degree
in Visual Communication at IDC, IIT Bombay.

External Examiner:

Internal Examiner:

Guide:

Chairperson:

DECLARATION

I declare that this written submission represents my idea in my own words and where other ideas or words have been included, I have adequately selected and referred the original source. I also declare that I have adhered to all principles of academic honesty and integrity and have not misinterpreted or fabricated or falsified any ideas / data / facts / sources in my submission.

I understand that any violation of the above will be cause for disciplinary action by the Institute and can also evoke penal action from the sources that have not been properly cited, or from whom proper permission has not been sought.

Kanika Kaul
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First & foremost, I would like to thank Prof. G V Sreekumar for his unwavering guidance and unparalleled feedback in this project. Without him, this project would lack focus and finesse.

I would also like to thank Prof. Sudesh Balan, Prof. Mandar Rane, Prof. Raja Mohanty & Prof. Alka Hingorani for their suggestions during our group presentations & juries.

I would also like to thank my Visual Communication batch of 14-16 for their support, jokes & general good-will throughout our projects. We survived!

Lastly, I would like to thank my friends and family for their unconditional support and understanding throughout my stressed out moments.

ABSTRACT

This project documents a series of workshops conducted to teach children between the ages of 10 & 12 Devanagari calligraphy with the intent to sensitize them to the art of calligraphy and writing beautiful letterforms as well as generate awareness about calligraphy not just as a hobby or craft activity but also a creative process of expression.

I created a 3 workshop structure wherein I designed activities & tasks that would aid their understanding of Devanagari and help them learn calligraphy using a structured, step-by-step process. The activities begin with an introduction to basic strokes and then move on to more complex and technical aspects of calligraphy.

The children responded well to more traditional and basic tools and tasks rather than abstracted versions of the same activities.

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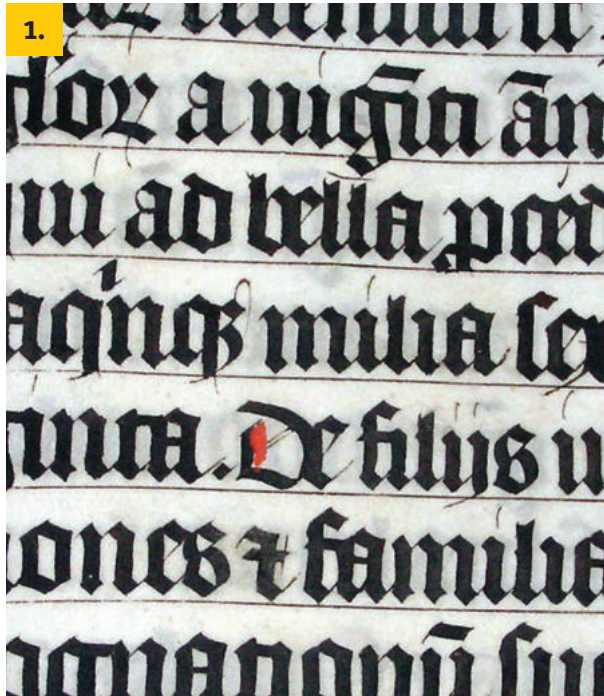
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Source: freeislamiccalligraphy.com/portfolio-category/calligraphy-in-the-public-domain/



01

INTRODUCTION

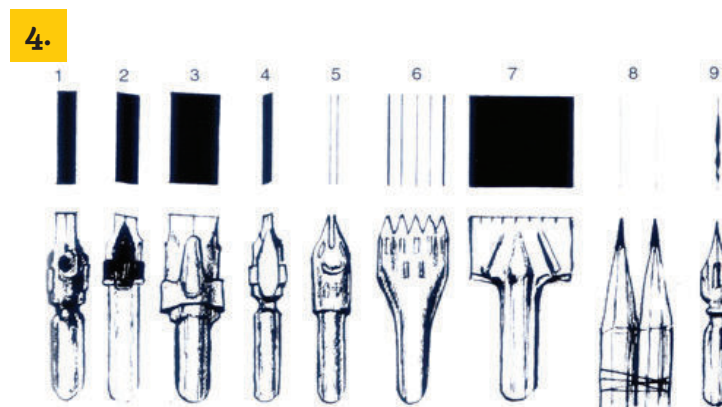
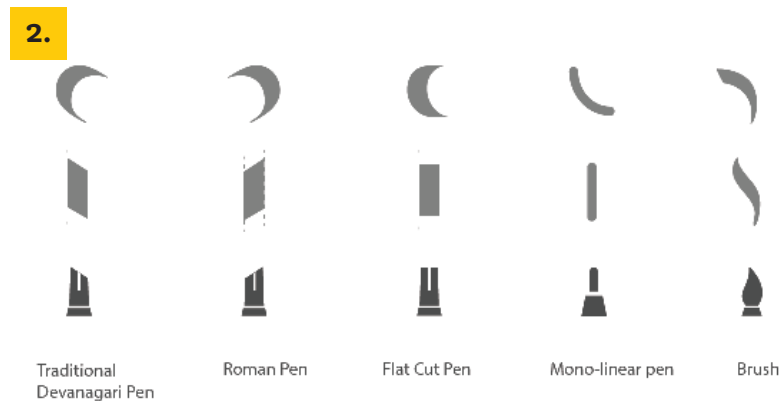
DEFINITION OF CALLIGRAPHY

Calligraphy is the art of beautiful writing. Contemporary calligraphic practices can be defined as the art of giving form to signs and symbols in an expressive manner.

Calligraphy continues to flourish in the forms of wedding & event invitations, font design and typography, hand-lettered logo design, religious art, announcements, graphic design and commissioned calligraphic art, cut stone inscriptions, and memorial documents. It is also used for

props and moving images for film, television, birth & death certificates, official documents, maps, etc.

The principal tool of calligraphy is the pen, which may be flat or round-nibbed, brush, etc. For some decorative purposes, multi-nibbed pens - steel brushes - are used. Works have been also created with felt-tip and ballpoint pens; these works do not employ any angled lines. However, calligraphy can be done with tools ranging from reed pens to sponge sticks.



1.
Traditional bamboo reed pen for Devanagari
Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qalam

2.
Representation of the different tool nibs
Source: dsquare.in/devft/en/images/Basic_tool.png

3.
Modern metal Devanagari nibs
Source: itsybitsy.in/store/images/IBCA71412_LRG.JPG

4.
Different tools that can be used for calligraphy
Source: www.pinterest.com/pcarina/caligraphy/



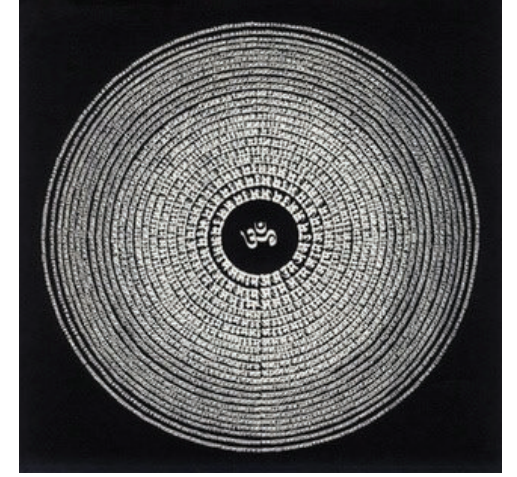
TOOLS USED IN CALLIGRAPHY

Devanagari calligraphy is generally done using a bamboo reed pen with a 45° angled cut nib.

The principal tools for latin calligraphy are the pen, which can have a flat-balled nib, round nib, or many nibs, and the brush.

However, in modern expressive calligraphy, nearly any thing that can make a mark can used for calligraphy. This includes objects created specifically for writing/art or even objects that are not, for example: toothbrush, syringe, shaving brush, even a piece of folded cardboard.

देशो पात्राणांचा नव्हे: देशो काष्टांचा नव्हे:
 देशो मातोचा नव्हे: देशो वीर्मांचा नव्हे:
 देशो पटोचा नव्हे: देशो धातुचा नव्हे:
 पात्राणांचा फुटेल: लाकडाचा मोडेल:
 मातोचा तो वीरिल: वीर्मांचा तो पुमेल:
 पटोचा तो फाटेल: धातुचा तो झोजेल:
 देवो तो अछेदु: अभेदु: अव्युत:
 अलग्न... सर्वोत्तमक तो: सर्वोत्तीतु
 तो: सर्वकर्तो तो: सर्व माक्षो
 तो: ऐमा प्रमेश्वर एक आति:।



Work by Prof. R K Joshi, respected calligraphy
 and typography faculty at IDC, IIT Bombay
 and a great source of inspiration.

Source: [idc.iitb.ac.in/dsource/course/calligraphy/
 examples/professor-r-k-joshi](http://idc.iitb.ac.in/dsource/course/calligraphy/examples/professor-r-k-joshi)



WHY CALLIGRAPHY?

Calligraphy is a practice that not only creative but also rigorous and requires patience. If practiced over a long period of time, calligraphy can become a way of expression.

Studies have shown that calligraphy can have a positive influence on a person's personality in character, and through its expressive nature can trigger an emotional reaction in both the artist and the viewer. If used as a tool for expression, it can become an emotional release for the artist and can help create a positive space.

I would like to create this positivity in the children through calligraphy, as I feel that it can be a powerful yet beautiful way of expression. Through the workshops that I conduct, I wish to give them a peek into the wondrous world of this artform.

Devanagari calligraphy is an artform that is celebrated and created by only a small group of people in our country. I want to bring it to the forefront and help carry on this beautiful art.



POINTS OF STUDY

I came up with these four aspects that I needed to study in order to get a better idea of how I must go about teaching this art form to children.

- Devanagari: its history, its structure, and its graphical form and make-up.
- Analysis of current aids available to teach devanagari structure to children.

- Previous projects in the same field and the insights I can receive from the same, to help me understand the context better.

- Visiting schools, interacting with teachers so that I can understand the teaching methodology, and interacting with children to gauge their understanding and the effects of the teachers' methods.

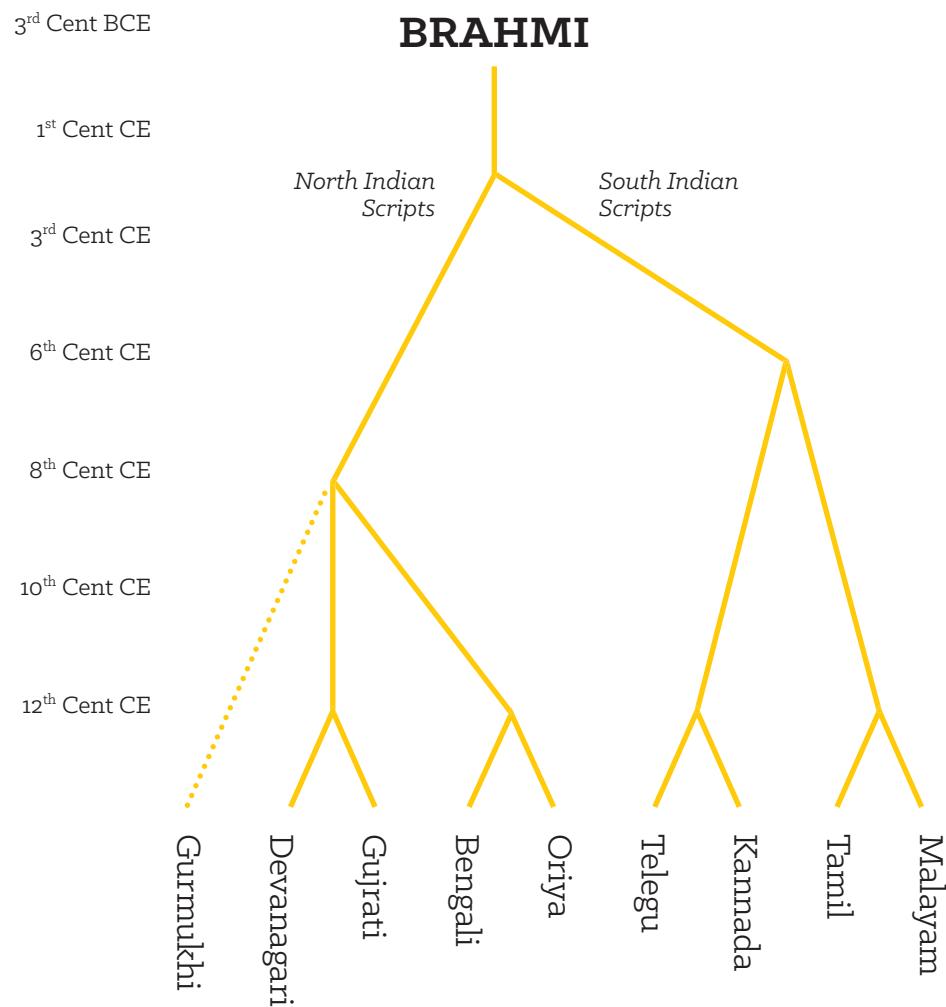


Chart showing how modern Indic scripts are derived from the ancient Brahmi script in a process of evolution starting in the 3rd century BCE.

Source: w3.org/2002/Talks/09-ri-indic/indic-paper.html



02

STUDY & ANALYSIS: DEVANAGARI

HISTORY

Devanagari is an alphasyllabary alphabet of India and Nepal. It is written from left to right, has a strong preference for symmetrical rounded shapes within squared outlines, and is recognisable by a horizontal line that runs along the top of full letters. In a cursory look, the Devanagari script appears different from other Indic scripts such as Bangla, Oriya or Gurmukhi, but a closer examination reveals they are very similar except for angles and structural emphasis.

The Nagari script has roots in the ancient Brahmi script family. Some of the earliest epigraphical evidence attesting to the developing Sanskrit Nagari script in ancient India, in a form similar to Devanagari, is from the 1st to 4th century CE inscriptions

discovered in Gujarat. The Nagari script was in regular use by 7th century CE, and fully developed by the end of first millennium of the common era.

The use of Sanskrit in Nagari script in medieval India is attested by numerous pillar and cave temple inscriptions, including the 11th century Udayagiri inscriptions in Madhya Pradesh, a brick with inscriptions found in Uttar Pradesh, dated to be from 1217 CE, which is now held at the British Museum in London. The script and related versions have been discovered in ancient relics outside of India, such as in Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Indonesia; while in East Asia, Siddha Matrika, a script that is considered the closest precursor to Nagari, was in use by the Buddhists.

Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devanagari

1.	Vowels	Consonants	
Group 1	letters with full verti-bar attached (अंत्यदंडयुक्त)	20	
	अ	ख घ च ज झ त थ ध न प ब भ म य व ष स क्ष श	
Group 2	letters with full verti-bar detached (अंत्यदंडयुक्त)	3	
	ग ण श		
Group 3	letters with a short-bar (अल्पदंडयुक्त)	14	
	उ ऊ लृ लृ ङ छ ट ठ ड ढ द ल ह ळ		
Group 4	letters with a central-bar (मध्यदंडयुक्त)	4	
	ऋ ॠ क फ		
Group 5	letter without a bar (दंडरहित)	1	
	र		



1.
Bapurao Naik's categorization of
Devanagari letterforms

2.
Terminology and components of
the script

Source: Bapurao Naik's 'Typography of
Devanagari - Vol 1'



ANATOMY OF LETTERFORMS

S V Bhagwat (1961), in his thesis, groups Devanagari letterforms on the basis of graphical similarity according to guidelines that he has defined:

“The top most lines are the Rafar line, followed by the Matra line and Head line, also referred to as the Shirorekha. After the Shirorekha, the upper mean line and lower mean line are indicated. The upper mean line denotes the point from which the actual letter starts and the lower mean line is marked where the distinguishing characteristics of the letters come to an end. These lines are followed by the Base line, which is where the complete letter ends and the lower matras begin. The lower most line is the Rukar line where the lowest portion of the Rukar ends.”

Bapurao Naik graphically organized Devanagari letters into five groups based on the position of the Kana or Verti-bar. Proportionally, Naik uses the stroke thickness of the tool as a base unit for the letterform's parts: six strokes for upper matra, twelve strokes for main character and six units for bottom matras, which is, in total, twenty-four units.

Mukund Gokhale, in 1975-76, outlines the parts of the anatomy as Urdhavarekha, Shirorekha, Skandhrekha, Nabhirekha, Janurekha, Padrekha, and Talrekha. He also uses the stroke thickness as a base unit for proportions, specifically: Four strokes for upper matras, eight strokes for main character, four strokes for bottom matras, totalling to sixteen units.

VOWEL	MATRAS	NAME
अ		
आ	।	Kana
इ	ि	Short velanti
ई	ी	Long velanti
उ	ु	Short ukar
ऊ	ू	Long ukar
ऋ	ॠ	Single prithvi sign
ॠ	ॡ	Double prithvi sign
ऌ	ॢ	Single klpti sign
ॢ	ॣ	Double klpti sign
ए	ँ	Single matra
ऐ	ं	Double matra
ओ	ो	Kana matra
औ	ौ	Kana double matra
अं	॑	Anuswar
अः	॒	Visarg

Left:
Chart showing the terminologies of
Devanagari letterform components

Source: Bapurao Naik's 'Typography of
Devanagari - Vol 1'



TERMINOLOGY & VISUAL GRAMMAR OF SCRIPT

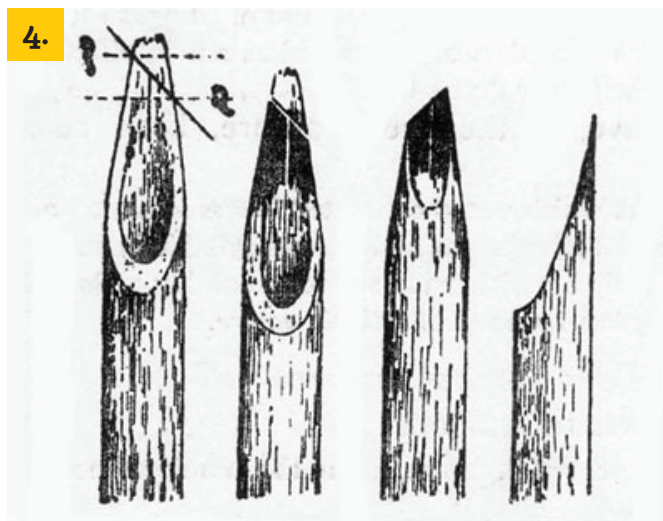
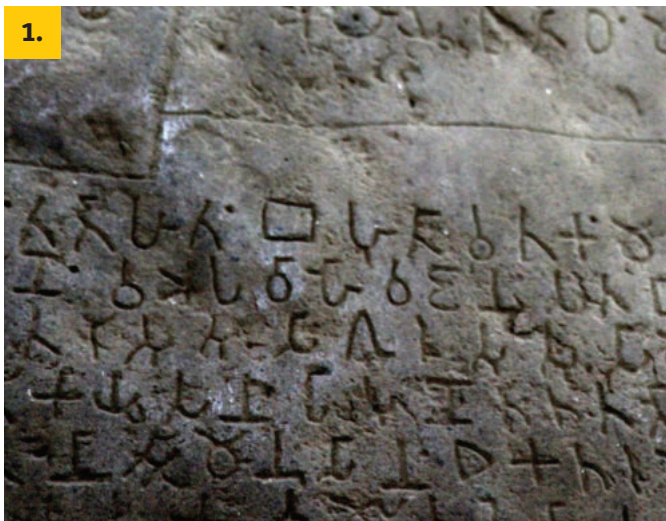
ANGULAR FORMS:

Every letter has one straight stroke, one right angle near the headline and at least one break. Every letter except ँ and ऐ has at least a circle, a curve and a loop.

PROBLEMATIC FORMS:

Every letter requires liftings of the pen, are back facing, have back slopes and often the diacritics are placed at inconvenient places.

Source: Bapurao Naik's 'Typography of Devanagari - Vol 1'



1.
Ashoka's stone inscriptions
Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Indian_epigraphy
2.
Palm leaf inscriptions
Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Indian_epigraphy
3.
Mehrauli iron pillar inscriptions
Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iron_pillar_of_Delhi
4.
Traditional Devanagari tool and angle of nib
Source: Bapurao Naik's 'Typography of Devanagari - Vol 1'



WRITING MATERIALS

STONE INSCRIPTION:

Emperor Ashoka's edicts were chiselled into stone for longevity, but the chiselling created sharp pointed ends.

(See image 1)

IRON INSCRIPTION:

The Mirhauili Iron pillar is an example of this where the casting and engraving are done with gold and silver.

(See image 2)

PALM LEAF INSCRIPTION:

A common writing medium in the south, the palm leaf varied from 1-3 feet in length and 1-4 inches in width

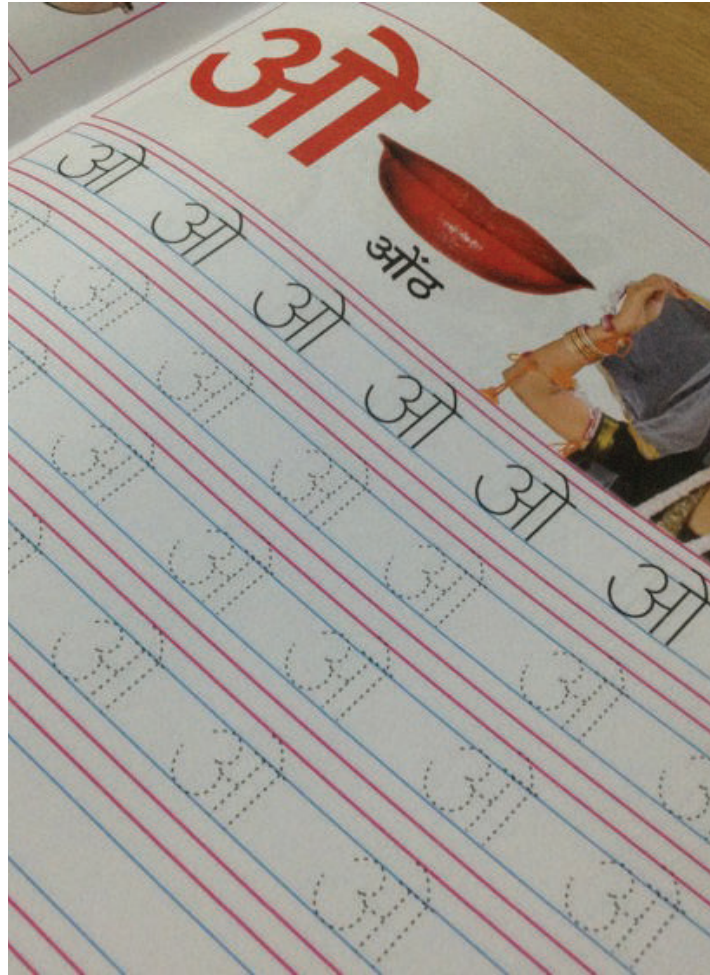
on which the script was incised with a stylus after which lamp black was rubbed on it. In North India, ink was used and the letters took a more rounded form.

(See image 3)

TOOLS:

Traditionally, Devanagari was written with a reed or bamboo pen that is cut broad to a slant in the opposite direction. The angle of the pen-point to the head-line is kept steady at 45°.

(See image 4)



Left:

One of the many similar books available in the market to teach Hindi to children



02

STUDY & ANALYSIS: CURRENT TEACHING AIDS

BACKGROUND

Many books and tools are already available in the market to teach children devanagari. I analysed such tools to judge their effectiveness and overall experience.

The books are mostly learn-by-copying based, meaning that the letterform is printed on the top of the page and the student must copy it below multiple times, with the help of a dotted form as a guide.

They also teach the concept of matras, with a similar method of copying. The issue with such a method is the lack of comprehension; the concept is not explained but simply presented. Any confusions that are created as a result

cannot really be dealt with because of the physical distance present between the student and the book.

Copying the form also does not help the student understand its structure; it makes the student ape the form presented without really reflecting on how the strokes flow from one to the other, or the technical construction of the letter.

These books are sometimes stipulated as part of the curriculum, used to enhance student handwriting and make it more legible and clear. This also creates a certain disassociation from the letters, as they are taught mechanically.

OBSERVATIONS & INSIGHTS



Available books shown here do not give room to the student to write the letter in their own way, but focus on copying the letterform given.

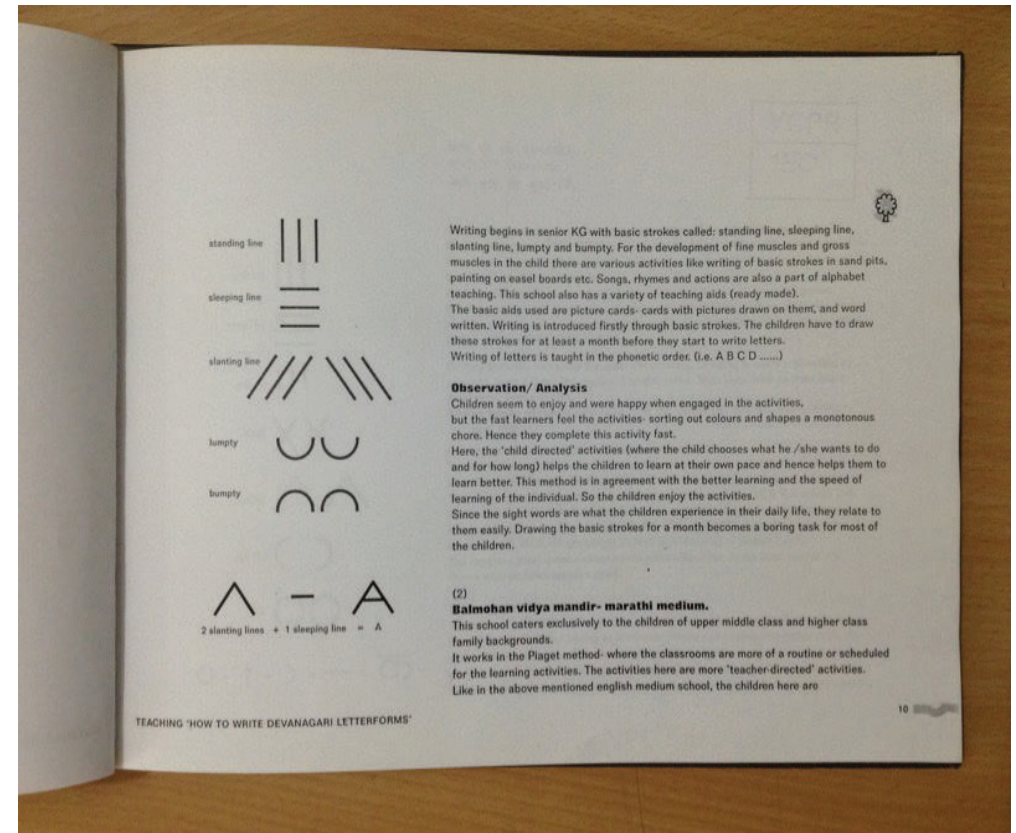
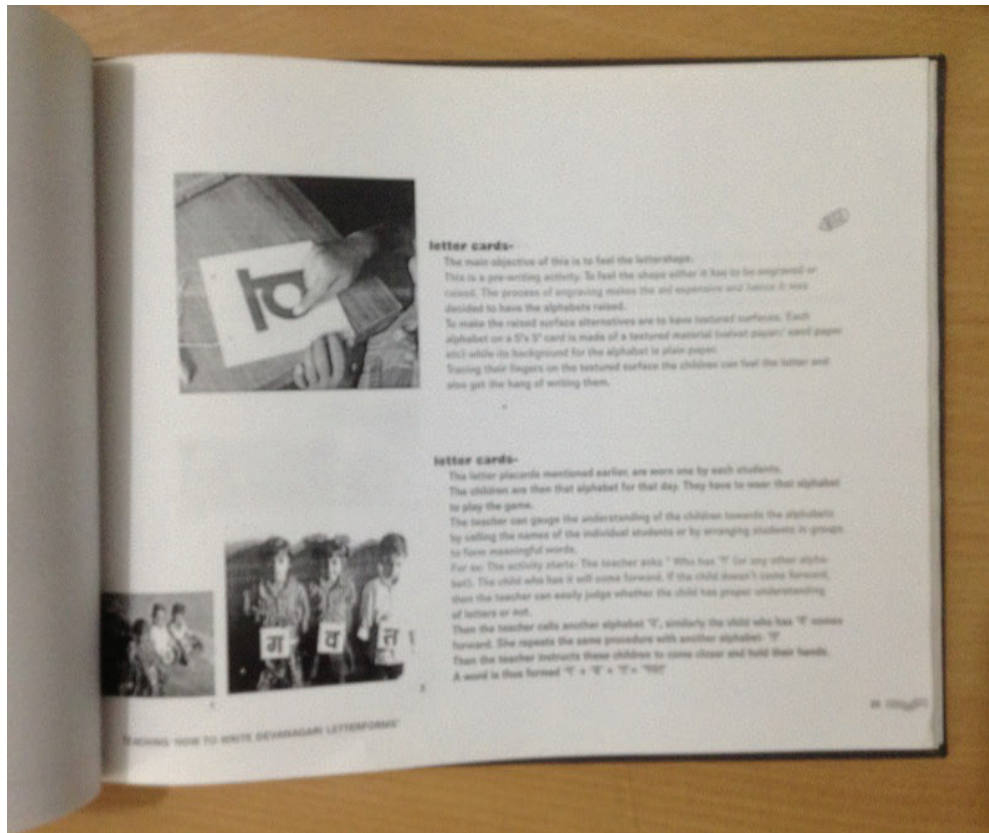
Some contextual images are given for the student to understand the phonetic pronunciation of the letter. (see image 1)

The forms themselves do not follow the traditional system of devanagari calligraphy, but are simplified for a different tool like a pencil. (see image 2)

Though some guides are given, they are basic. Certain characters that are complex require specific guidelines that are missing. Letter & Word Association is not always relevant and is distracting from the shape. (see image 3)

Tracing Method does not concentrate on flow of shape but simply on rote learning. Complex forms such as conjuncts, half forms etc. cannot be introduced without explaining their basic logic.

A sequence based on the phonetic method is not based on complexity of form.



Above:
Ms. Karande's project report



02

STUDY & ANALYSIS: PREVIOUS PROJECTS

“TEACHING DEVANAGARI LETTERFORMS TO CHILDREN”

PRITI KARANDE
PROJECT 2
M.DES (VC)
IDC, IIT BOMBAY

Priti Karande from the 1999-2001 batch of Visual Communication had worked on a similar topic for her P2, and I read her report to gain more insights on how to go about my process as well. A few things I learnt from her documentation of process were:

- Teaching methodologies
- Learning methodologies
- Childrens’ behavioural patterns
- Her experience through a similar project

The way Ms. Karande had designed activities for the children gave me immense motivation and inspiration for this project.

Her process of study, analysis, workshop structure and purpose was extremely rigorous and provided me with lots of tips for the later stages of this project.



02

STUDY & ANALYSIS:

SCHOOL VISITS

BACKGROUND

As part of my studies, I visited the Kendriya Vidyalaya located at IIT Bombay in order to get a glimpse of the way Devanagari letterform structure is taught to children currently, where three Hindi & Marathi teachers were interviewed:

Mrs. Mohini Apte, 42
Ms. Kala Sharma, 27
Mrs. Tara Reddy, 48

and two students:

Pragya, 5
Shiv, 5

Though the first two teachers I met were very traditional in their thought process & methodology and were not too cooperative with my study, Mrs. Tara Reddy dispelled all my demotivation with an enlightening new process that she created to teach her students Devanagari letterforms, despite being disabled and not being able to correctly write forms on the blackboard.

OBSERVATIONS

01

MRS MOHINI APTE

METHOD:

1. Mrs Apte's method of teaching is quite traditional, wherein she first writes the letter on the blackboard and pronounces it out loud, asking the children to repeat what she says.
2. She then mentions words and objects that begin with the same letter so as to build phonetic association.
3. Children then copy the shape in their notebooks, alongwith objects and words that start with the same letter.

The sequence of the introduction of new letterforms to the class is according to phonetics, meaning in their traditional varnmala sequence.

She believes, "a child who is confused about the shape of a letter should write it multiple times and they will get it."

She refers to the textbooks which have outdated phonetic references and badly created graphics.

Children of her class explain the shape of a letter exactly in her words, meaning that it is memorised by rote learning.



OBSERVATIONS

02

MS KALA SHARMA

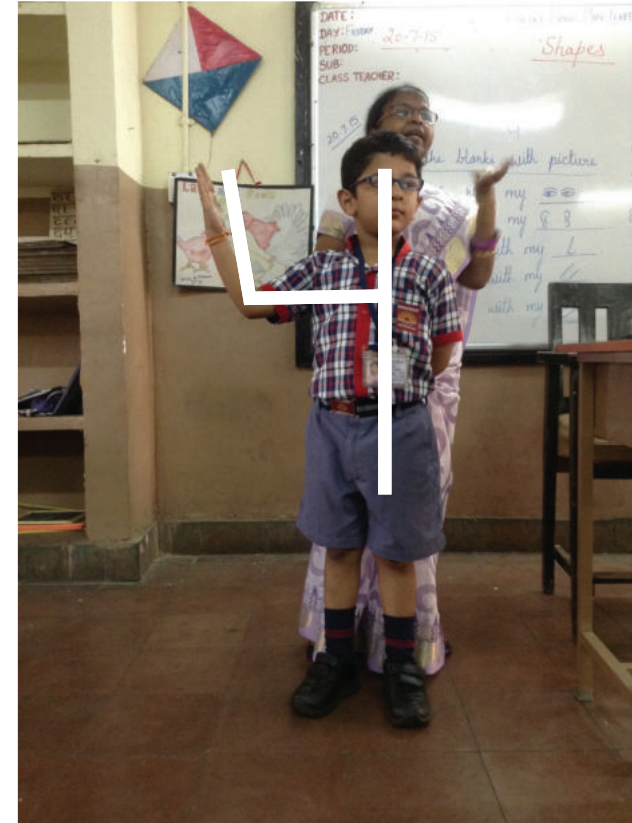
METHOD:

1. Ms Sharma's method of teaching is similar to Mrs. Apte's: traditional, wherein she first writes the letter on the blackboard and pronounces it out loud, asking the children to repeat what she says.
2. She mentions words and objects that begin with the same letter.
3. Children then copy the shape in their notebooks, alongwith objects and words that start with the same letter.

The sequence of the introduction of new letterforms to the class is according to phonetics, meaning in their traditional varnmala sequence.

She believes, "good handwriting is when they can match what's on the board."

Children of her class are generally difficult to control according to her, and making them constantly repeat what she says and copy what she writes is the only way she can maintain discipline, she says.



Above:
Children standing as क, न and प and
creating the structure of the letter with
their bodies.



OBSERVATIONS

03

MRS TARA REDDY

METHOD:

1. Ms Reddy first writes the letter on the blackboard and pronounces it out loud, asking the children to repeat what she says.
2. She then makes the students create the shape of the letterform with their bodies.
3. After teaching the structure of a few letterforms, she then creates an entire word by making 3 or more children stand together, with some creating letterforms and some creating matras with their body. She adds phonetic association also, except she gives a situation to envelop the object she uses as a link so that the concept sticks in their head.

She uses concepts like 'sleeping line', 'standing line', which stress on the structure and helps the children get familiar with terms that are recurring rather than teaching each letterform in isolation from others.

Children love her class, and fight over who gets to be the next letterform.

The writing part is secondary in her classes, understanding the shape is far more important.

ह इ छ

ष प

ब व

य थ

घ ध

Top:

The complex joinery that is difficult to understand.

Middle:

The orientation of the middle stroke is a cause of confusion.

Bottom:

The characters are similar apart from the knot and this creates confusion.



INSIGHTS

Through my school visits and my interactions with both teachers & students, I gained many meaningful insights that would help me later on in my project:

Children are difficult to keep busy; paper and pencil based work assigned is difficult to complete with full attention.

A 3D or spatial understanding and construction of shapes leads to faster recognition and generates higher interest in the children.

Similar characters in terms of shapes and joinery are learnt faster; the same applies to contextual associations.

Apart from these I also understood some certain problem letterforms which the children find hard to remember/comprehend, in some cases because of the letterform's complexity, and in other cases because of confusion of orientation of elements of the letterform.

WORKSHOP 01

- Introduction to tool
- Stroke basics
- Shapes with strokes
- Practice strokes

WORKSHOP 02

- Grids & guidelines
- Proportion of script
- Construction of letterforms [demo]
- Practice of letterform calligraphy
- Simple words

WORKSHOP 03

- Exploration
- Experimentation
- Expressive composition



03

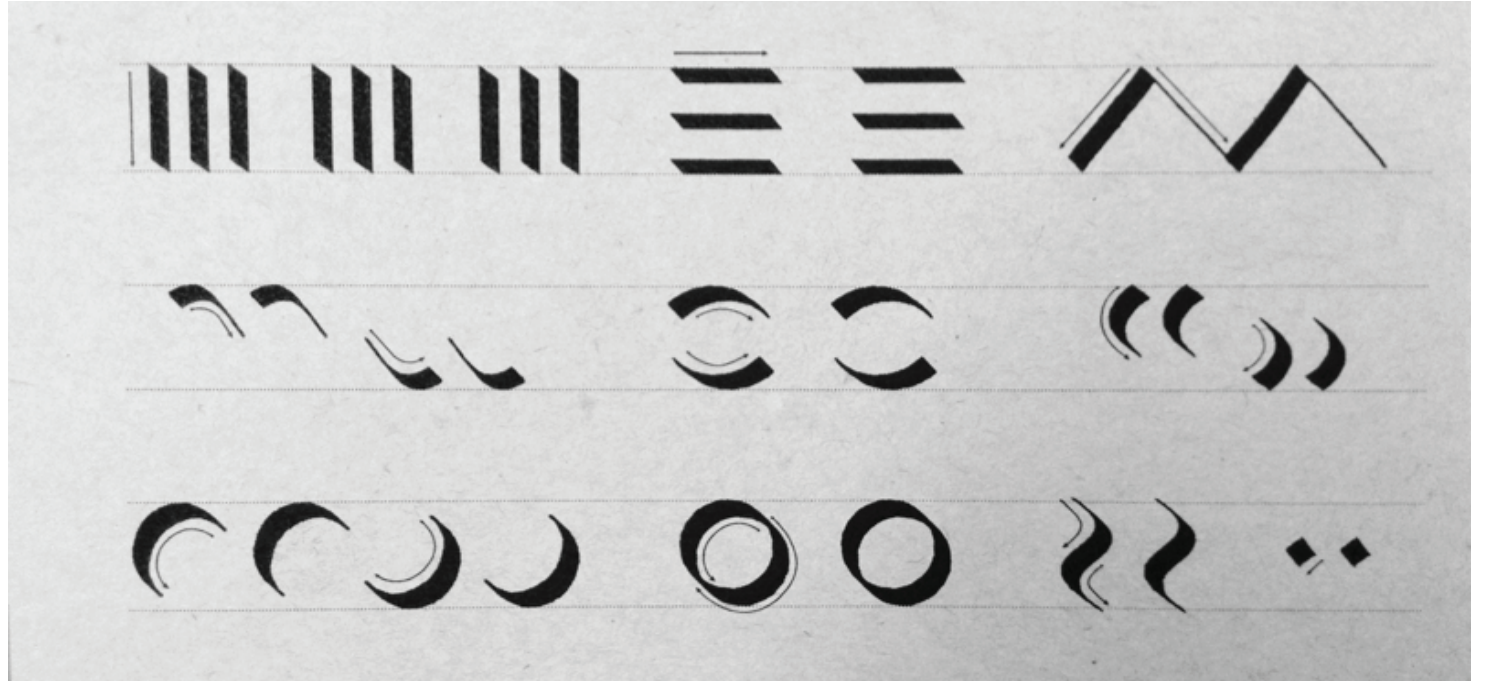
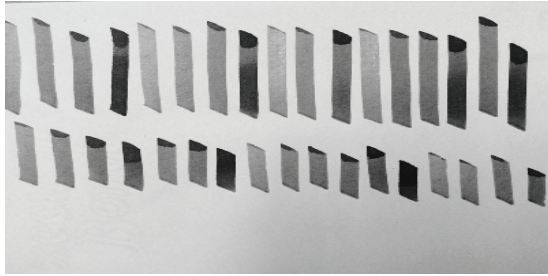
CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

PROPOSAL + PLAN OF ACTION

I came up with an action plan that outlines three workshops, that are separate sequential sessions so as to give breathing space between the topics covered and also to make sure that the children get time to absorb what has been taught and practice.

The workshops cover basics of calligraphy, after that move to letterform construction, then word & sentence construction.

The workshop content has been broken up into 3 chunks of topics to be covered in a systematic step-by-step process. Each workshop has been structured such that the content does not become overwhelming and slowly progresses higher in technique.



Above:
Reference images of strokes to be
practiced in Workshop 1



WORKSHOP 01

STRUCTURE & CONTENT

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- *Bamboo reed pens*
- *Markers*
- *Ink + containers*
- *Paper*

LEARNING POINTS:

- *Technique of the tool*
- *Technique of the art*
- *Enjoy the process*
- *Sensitivity to letterforms*

The first workshop will be the first look at calligraphy for probably all the children who are participating. Keeping that in mind, I designed Workshop 1 starting with familiarising the students to the tools and get them interested in the subject.

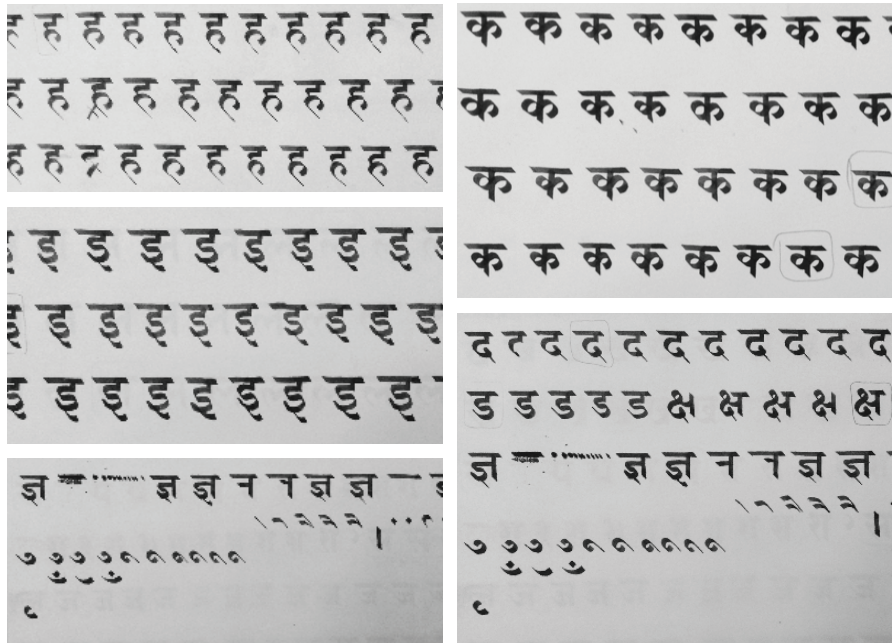
1. INTRODUCTION TO TOOL

- Its specifications - angle of nib
- How to hold the pen

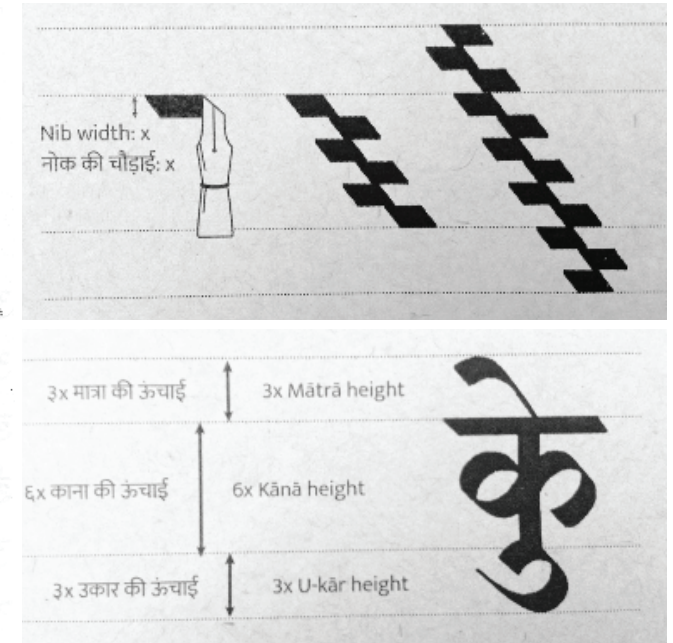
2. DEMONSTRATION

- Horizontal, vertical, diagonal, circular lines
- Triangle, circle and square using lines

3. PRACTICE



Above:
Reference images of strokes to be
practiced in Workshop 2



Above:
Stroke sequences and stroke ladder



WORKSHOP 02

STRUCTURE & CONTENT

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- *Bamboo reed pens*
- *Markers*
- *Ink + containers*
- *Paper - Rough + Tracing*

LEARNING POINTS:

- *Sensitivity to letterforms*
- *Understand terminology, proportion, guidelines*
- *Understand stroke sequences*
- *Good grasp on the tool*

I designed Workshop 2 as a knowledge point where I give them lot of information about stroke sequences and terminology. By this point they must be familiar and comfortable with the tool. It will be more labour intensive than Workshop 1.

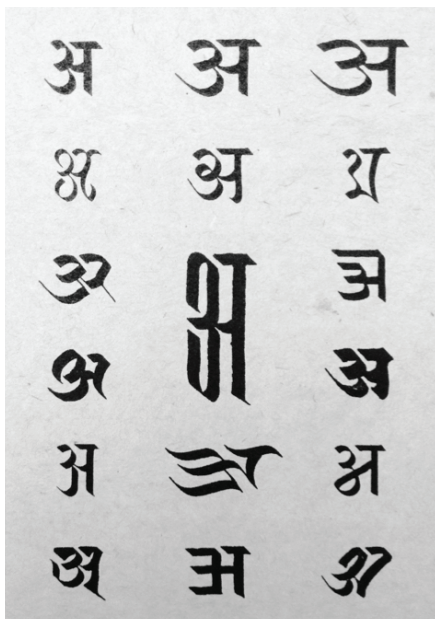
1. INTRODUCTION TO GUIDELINES

- Proportional stroke ladder: proportion
- Terminology: Kana, Ukar and Matra height

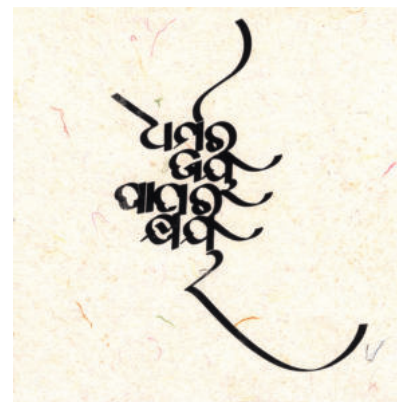
2. DEMONSTRATION OF LETTERFORMS

- Form wise grouping of characters
- Sequence of strokes
- Writing simple words (with+without matras)

3. PRACTICE



Above:
The images show how to bend the rules
of proportion and guidelines.



Above:
Examples of expressive calligraphy



WORKSHOP 03

STRUCTURE & CONTENT

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Any writing tool
- Ink, paint, water, containers
- Chartpaper, newspaper

LEARNING POINTS:

- Sustain the activity
- Good understanding of calligraphic construction
- Able to bend the guidelines & proportions
- Enjoy calligraphy!

Workshop 3 is all about them exploring the tool and the subject on their own. It a completely open space for them to break the rules they have just been taught and enjoy calligraphy not as a rigorous activity but a passionate, expressive exercise.

1. EXPLORATORY DEMONSTRATION

- Introduction of color
- Playing with proportion
- Experimenting with stroke length, width, shape, sequence
- Experimenting with different tools

2. PRACTICE

3. PRESENTATION OF WORK BY PROF. R K JOSHI & ACHYUT PALAV





04

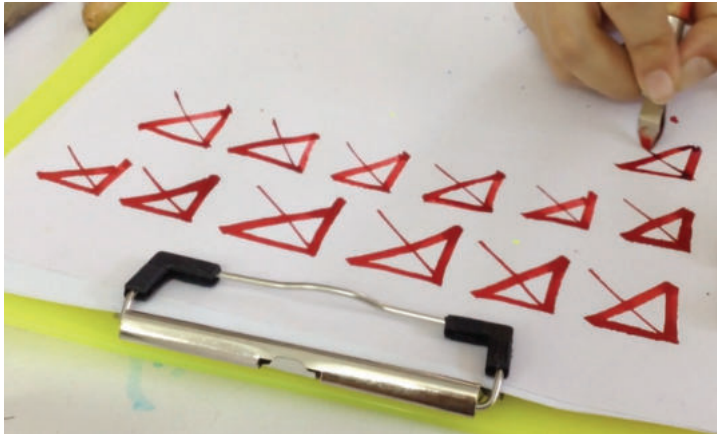
MOCK WORKSHOPS

Armed with this new structure of content and a will to begin teaching, I conducted a number of mock workshops in order to check the effectiveness of my ideas.

I conducted these workshops with 3 levels of participants: one being Masters students at IDC, the second being the newest entrants to IDC in the new B.Des programme, and the third was my actual target audience: children between the ages of 10 and 12.

These workshops were my first foray into teaching calligraphy, and they gave me immense insights about the flow of the content I had devised, the practical aspects of conducting such workshops, plus motivation to continue when I saw children enjoying practicing strokes and loosening up in the process.

The 3 workshops were the basis to later change my approach to the traditional flow of content I had imagined.



Left column:
The different kinds of strokes practiced by the participants

Right column:
Introduction of stroke ladder, and then proportionate letterforms came out.



MOCK WORKSHOP O1

M.DES STUDENTS

Duration: 1.5 hours

Participants: 2

This first workshop was a quick and informal one. It was also my first time teaching the subject to anyone.

The first thing I asked them to do was write their names in Devanagari to begin with, in order to have a before-and-after comparison at the end. We then started off by practicing lines, both horizontal & vertical, then moved to the 'X' shape, to practice all lines in one go. After enough practiced, simple and complex curves were introduced. After enough practice of elements, the stroke ladder was introduced, and after that we discussed stroke sequences.

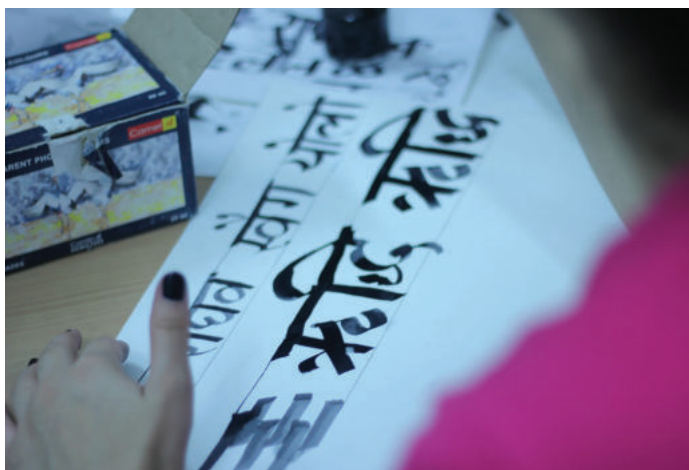
INSIGHTS:

- **Confidence is key! (for both the participant & for me)**

I realised, as M.Des students, the participants were very confident of their skills and thus needed no reinforcement or motivation. I was also feeling confident after being able to accurately explain processes, terms and structures.

- **Flow of content works.**

In a simple way, the structure of content made sense and did not create confusion in their minds. The step-by-step introduction of elements made it easy to move along.



Left column:
The different kinds of strokes practiced by the participants

Right column:
Introduction of stroke ladder, and then proportionate letterforms came out.



MOCK WORKSHOP 02

B.DES STUDENTS

Duration: 2.5 hours

Participants: 11

This workshop was a lot more intensive and informal than the previous. However this was my first attempt at teaching calligraphy to a group of students who had never heard about or seen Devanagari calligraphy.

As in the previous workshop, I made them write their names first so that there was something to compare to at the end. For all of the participants it was the first ever experience with a calligraphy tool, and they struggled to use it correctly. Once we started practicing lines to get familiar with the tool and its angle, the difficulties eased out. I tried a change of tools for a student if he/she was finding difficulty with the reed pen or the nibs. After that I introduced stroke ladder and made them try different nib sizes & widths. At the end, there was a marked difference between initial attempts and practiced strokes.

INSIGHTS:

- **Intimidated after demonstration**

The demonstration I gave, in the first go, made them suddenly very underconfident of their skills. I realised this might be an issue with the children too.

- **Content was simpler than the previous workshop**

As the participants were new to the subject I simplified the content from the first workshop, and it seemed to be a good idea as it was not overwhelming for them.





MOCK WORKSHOP 03

CHILDREN

Duration: 1 hour

Participants: 2

This was the most personal and engaging workshop. I had simplified the content even more after the second workshop, and made it more engaging.

I asked them to first write their names using the tools any way they understood, and they did so in unique ways and added flourishes to their letterforms. After the first demonstration, they were excited to try the tools on their own. However, they struggled with straight lines and with stroke angle, and because of this repeatedly asked for a demonstration.

They loved the idea of having a neater handwriting, and said they would tell their friends to come and try calligraphy, since it is much easier than what they had thought and assumed.

INSIGHTS:

- **Technical information**

After this workshop I decided to radically change the amount of technical information that was provided to the children, as it hampered their flow.

- **End product oriented**

The children need some physical, tangible outcome of the workshop rather than just knowledge, it helped them pay attention.



05

CONCEPT RE-DEVELOPMENT

PROPOSAL

After the mock workshops, I made radical changes to the structure as well as the information I impart. I realised for children I needed to think of the content in a wholly new way so that not only do they learn, but they enjoy the process as much.

I cut down the technical content to minimum, and stuck to a more simpler goal: Calligraphy is the art of beautiful writing, and that's all I need to impart.

I went back to the drawing board and began to think of activities and exercises that would be most effective in getting my learning points across to the students in an engaging way.

I aimed to create a more holistic workshop structure than one which is based on demonstration and practice.

ACTIVITY 01

Children attempt to create a 'good looking' (proportional, neat) letterform in a tray of sand with their fingers. The tactile aspect will help with retention, plus the material will make it less intimidating than ink.

ACTIVITY 02

As an interesting demonstration tactic, I use a glue stick to write on the paper, and then throw sand/powder on it to make the letterform emerge. The slight sense of magic will be enthralling, and greatly help in retention.

ACTIVITY 03

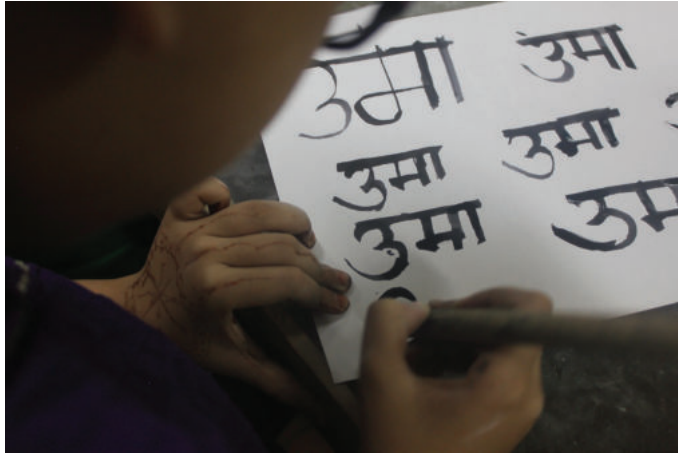
The children fill in colour on a sheet placed on top of a printed letterform, and they trace over it to understand the structure and joinery better.



The new structure is a lot more open and free than the previous. It relies on the participation and interest showed by the children.

The skeletal structure of the previous workshops, with the practice of basic strokes then introduction of stroke ladder and proportions is still there, but the amount of technical information has been reduced.

From the mock workshops I also realised the ink and reed pen are intimidating for a child with no experience in calligraphy before, so I decided to introduce that in a later stage and first stick to tools they are used to, like pencils and markers.



MOCK WORKSHOP





LEARNINGS & FURTHER SCOPE

06

CONCLUSION

After trying different ways of teaching calligraphy to children and conducting various workshops, I observed that certain methods work better than others: the sense of wonder as the ink from your nib flows onto the paper is unparalleled. Not only does it act as a learning tool but is also a release of innate creative energy. There is no greater sense of satisfaction than looking at your own creations.

I loved working with the children, watching them struggle and ultimately enjoy the whole process of learning and getting their hands dirty.

The series of workshops can be further utilized as recurring sessions, to teach calligraphy as well as enable not just children but anyone to experience that sense of ecstasy and magic that comes with this artform.



07

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