

# || application of indianness on roman letterforms ||

a project by shailesh shilwant ✓

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VCMSR -

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## acknowledgement

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all@idc



## approval sheet

This Visual communication Special project entitled application of indianness on roman letterform, is hereby approved as partial fulfilment for the degree of Master of Design.

**Guide:**



**Internal Examiner -1:**



**Internal Examiner - 2:**

| |

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## the idea

the idea started getting formed after observing and realising lack of indian look in roman typefaces. there are thousands of typefaces and fonts that are designed for roman letters. many of them are decorated based on one particular idea and that idea reflect the image of the typeface. but no one has tried to give an indian image to the roman typeface. there are very few decorative fonts available which gives the feeling of indianess, but they are not intentionally done. as the English has become universal language, lot of indian literature, indian thoughts, traditional concepts are written in English using roman script to convey and

communicate with other people to make them know about India, its tradition and culture. a lot of printed material like newspapers magazines, books, advertising material like posters, hoardings etc are also printed in english. which has a very strong indian content but it is losing its indian identity because of the roman script. so these type of printed material which has strong indian content, which talk about indian people, indian culture and tradition, should reflect indianess, while reading or viewing, it should look indian, which will create very strong image of that particular product.



this identity can be created by various means, like using colours, illustration styles, texture, forms, shapes, typefaces etc. for different purpose colours, texture, illustration, has been tried out by people to create indian identity, for example - marriage invitation, posters, in web sites etc. which talks about indian thoughts. but typeface is the least tried out to create particular identity.

some people like corporate designers, calligraphers, sign board painters, movie poster painters, has tried out various possibilities to create indian identity through letterforms but this is on very small scale, to just create the logo, symbol, the name of the shop or movie names and the intention is not to create the typeface , which can be used for mass production.

on the other side people also has been trying to make indian script look like roman to match with roman typeface. people has been trying to create devnagari fonts which look like roman, for example, helvetica, times new roman to full fill the requirements of bilingual text, but creating a roman font which look like devanagri or malayalam or any other indian scripts is a very less explored area. There is a lot of scope of experimentation with roman typefaces and indian elements which can be incorporated with roman letter forms.



## the approach

व - a

इ - S

अ - m

र - o



there can be two approaches of making the roman letterform look like indian.

one approach is study the indian scripts, find out the unlike elements in that which can be incorporated with roman letterforms. here the formal study of both the script can be done and the shape of the letterforms can be matched from both side.

one can also look at the ascender and descenders of both of the scripts which will help to create the identity of the letterform. also can use indian tools which are used to write indian scripts, like boru, to write the roman letterforms

the other approach is find out the elements from indian traditional arts and crafts, folk arts, classical arts, motifs which are used in indian iconography and try to incorporate them with the letterforms to make the letterform look like indian.

## the objective

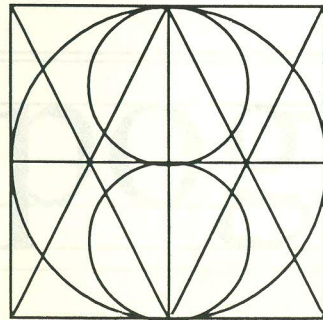
here the attempt is not to create the font but to study the roman letterform, its structural aspects and find out the possibilities, places where the change or the addition can be done to create or change the identity of the letterform.

and also find out metaphors and elements which are inspired from different cultural and traditional arts of India. the elements which reflects indianness. also find out the motifs which are used in indian tradition and can be incorporated in letterform.



## structural elements of roman letterform

over the centuries, a nomenclature has evolved that identifies the various components of individual letterforms. type designers and typographers should learn these vocabulary to know and understand the visual harmony and complexity of the roman letterforms.



roman letterform

the following list identifies the major components of roman letterform construction. in medieval times, horizontal guidelines were drawn to contain and each line of lettering. today, letterform and their parts are drawn on imaginary guidelines to bring uniformity to typography.

the basic shape of each capital roman letter can be extracted from this structure, which is composed of a bisected square, a circle, a triangle, an inverted triangle, and two smaller circle.

**baseline**- an imaginary line upon which base of each capital letter rests.

**capline**- an imaginary line that runs along the tops of the capital letters.

**meanline**- an imaginary line that establishes the height of the body of lowercase letter.

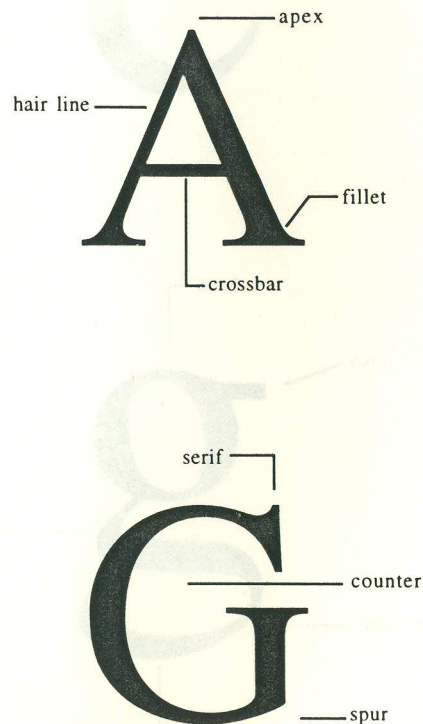
**x-height**- the distance from the baseline to the meanline. typically, this is the height of lowercase letters and is most easily measured on the lowercase 'x'.

all characters align optically on the baseline. the body heights of lowercase characters align optically at the x-height, and the tops of capitals align optically along the capline. to achieve precise alignments, the typeface designer makes optical adjustments.





## the single letter



### **apex :**

the peak of the triangle of an uppercase 'A'

### **arm :**

a projecting horizontal stroke that is unattached on one or both ends, as in the letters 'T' and 'E'.

### **ascender :**

a stroke on a lowercase letter that rises above the meanline.

### **bowl :**

a curved stroke enclosing the counter-form of a letter. an exception is the bottom from of the lowercase Raman 'g' which is called a loop.

### **bracket :**

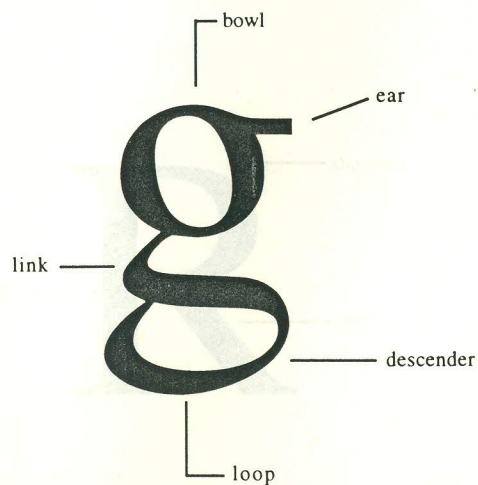
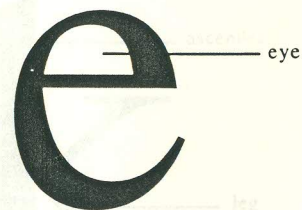
connection between a serif and stroke.

### **counter :**

the negative space that is fully or partially enclosed by a letterform.

### **crossbar :**

the horizontal stroke connecting two sides of the letterform [ as in 'e', 'A' and 'H' or bisecting the main stroke [as in 'f' and 't' ]



**cross stroke :**

roughly horizontal line extending outside primary vertical line of a character.

**descender :**

a stroke on a lowercase letterform that falls below the baseline.

**ear :**

a small stroke that projects from the upper right side of the bowl of the lowercase roman 'g'.

**eye :**

the enclosed part of the lowercase 'e'.

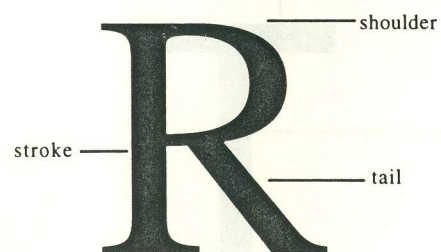
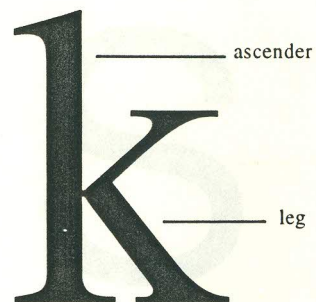
**fillet : [bracket]**

the contoured edge that connects the serif and stem in bracketed serif [ bracketed serifs are connected to the main stroke by this curved edge; unbracketed serifs connect to the main stroke with an abrupt angle without this contoured transition.]

**hairline :**

the thinnest stroke within a typeface that has strokes of variety weights.





**leg :**

the lower diagonal stroke of the letter 'K'.

**link :**

the stroke that connects the bowl and the loop of a lowercase 'g'.

**loop :**

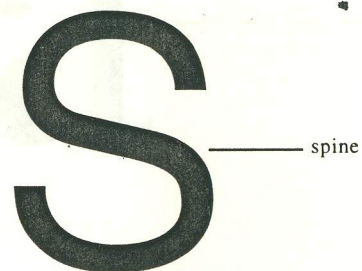
a curved bottom stroke enclosing the counter form of the lowercase roman 'g'.

**serifs :**

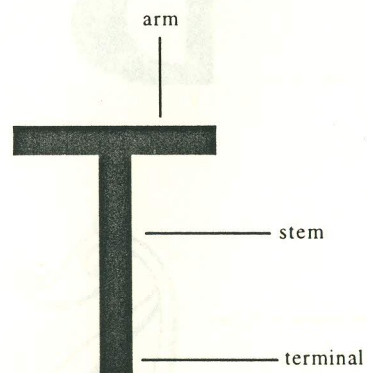
short strokes that extend from and at an angle to the upper and lower ends of the major strokes of the letterforms.

**shoulder :**

a curved stroke projecting from a stem.



spine



arm

stem

terminal

**spine :**

the central curved stroke of the letter 's'.

**spur :**

a small projection - smaller than a serif - that reinforces the point at the end of a curved stroke, as in the letter 'G'.

**stem :**

a major vertical or diagonal stroke in a letterform.

**stroke :**

any of the linear elements within a letterform; originally, any mark or dash made by the movement of a pen or brush in writing.

**tail :**

a diagonal stroke or loop at the end of the letter, as in 'R' or 'J'

**terminal :**

the end of any stroke that does not terminate with a serif.

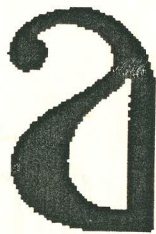
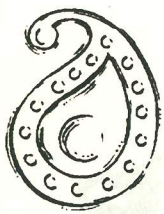


## possibilities

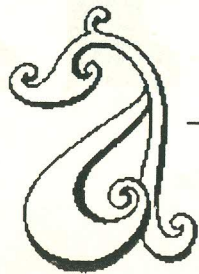


### the body

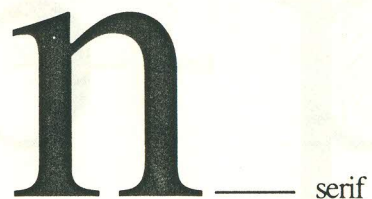
the whole letterform including the stem, the main lines which creates the letterform, serifs, loop, spine etc. there are two ways of giving different identity to the letterform using body.



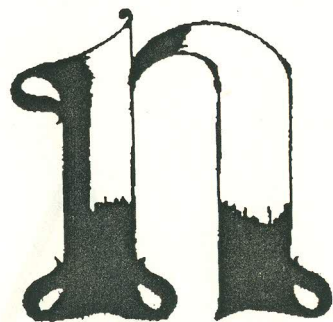
one way is you take the main form, counter shape of the element and try to fit the letterform in that particular shape. here you can take the whole counter shape to put the element or you can cut of some part of the shape and take only the main part which has unique identity and then put the letterform into that. in this case letterform get less distorted than the previous one.



the other way is to mould that element as per the letterform so here the shape of the letterform wont change but it looks like as if the letterform is created by that particular element.



n — serif

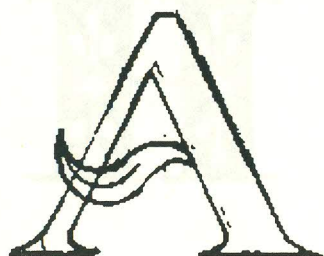
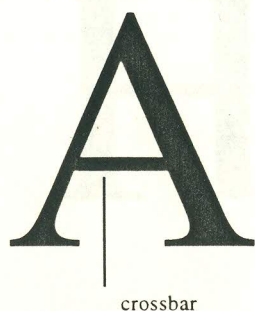
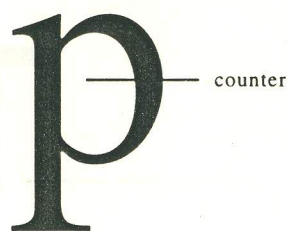


added element  
[ as serif ]

### serif

short strokes that extend from and at an angle to the upper and lower ends of the major strokes of the letterforms. serif is very small component but very strong and interesting point, which gives different identity to the letterforms. serif has potential of changing the look of the letterform. here you either add the particular element to the serif or you can put that element as a serif itself, to make the letterform look like indian.





### **counter**

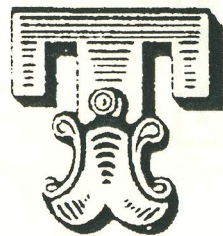
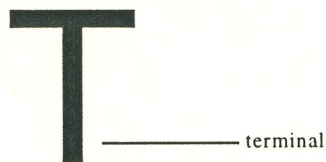
the negative space that is fully or partially enclosed by a letterform.

without changing the letterform you can add the element in counter part of the letterform to change the look of it. here the identity of letterform changes by adding a small part and not distorting the letterform at all.

### **crossbar**

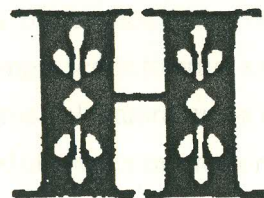
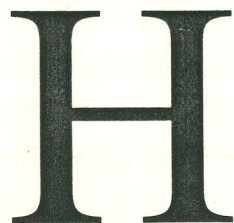
the horizontal stroke connecting two sides of the letterform [ as in 'e', 'A' and 'H' or bisecting the main stroke [as in 'f' and 't' ]

you can put the element at the point of crossbar without changing the letterform. the element can overlap some part of the letterform.



### **terminal**

the end of any stroke that dose not terminate with a serif.  
instead of putting the element as a whole letterform. the  
element can be incorperate in some part of the letterform.  
one way is put the element at the point terminal as the base  
or stand for the letterform.



### **inside the letterform**

without distorting the letterform you can insert the element in  
side the it. which will give different identity to the letterform.  
here you don't have to really change the out line of it .





## decorative wooden borders in indian architecture

wood has the distinction that it was used greatly in early building all over the world .in India also it is used on a large scale for doors, palisades, pillars, roofs, and ceiling. the natural qualities of wood gave ample scope to artist and craftsmen alike to create ornamental features upon it, because this early tradition in wood construction and long utilisation in architecture, its ornamentation reached a high standard in India.

in maharashtra, beautiful specimens of woodcarving can be found in nashik, aurangabad, poona and telgaon, to name only a few places. some examples of this style of fine carving are shown in the line drawings on the next page.

great imagination and an innate sense for ornament in its true perspective have been displayed in the making of these intricate and harmoniously combined patterns introducing flowers, leaves, geometrical shapes and the lotus.

nashik is also known for its carving in wood and carved timber houses, in which every beam, window , door, bracket and cornice is artistically decorated with carving, generally based on the form of the sacred lotus, leaves, flowers.



ascender

x-height





The typeface is inspired by the decorative forms used in **decorative wooden borders in indian architecture**. The method used here is the element has mould as per the letterform so it looks like as if the letterform is made out of that form. The typeface made here has become more ornamental and decorative because the shape from which the letterform has created is ornamental and it has lot of curves and circular lines into it. The typeface has become less readable and can be used for titles, subtitles for special and important words. It cannot be used for paragraphs, or the text which is in less than 30 pt. size. Because of its less readability.





spiral

spiral is a common motif in Indian art. it emanated from the circle and is a symbol of prosperity and fertility. suggestive of movement, it is worshipped on account of its life giving and benefic qualities. the spiral form is curved and undulating.

among the earliest examples is the end of the beam of gateway [ torana ] of the sanchi stupa, where the spiral of the scaly tail of a makara fills the end of the volute of the beam. it symbolises evolution or involution. a corresponding spiral fills the other end of the beam.



sun



moon

in pahari folk painting, the sun and moon are represented by two helicoidal spheres, imparting a most powerful impression of the whirling motion of these two cosmic bodies around their axes.





art & craft

ascender

x-height

descender



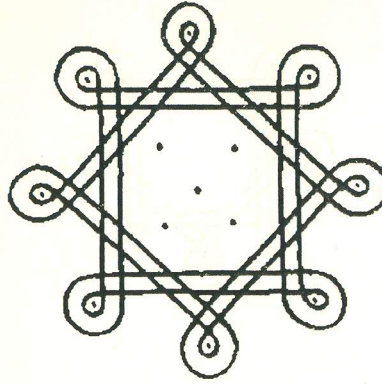


# art & craft

The typeface is inspired by the **spiral**, **spiral** is a common motif in Indian art. The form of spiral is used in the counter part of the letterform. The typeface has become partially ornamental. It is also readable with having different identity. The typeface can be used for titles, subtitles for special and important words. It cannot be used if it is in less than 20pt size.

Here the spiral is used by making it sharp and geometrical but it can be used as it is (shown in the picture) so it will become more natural and ethnic. But the readability will be less than this.

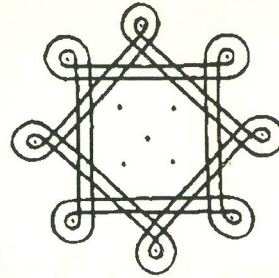




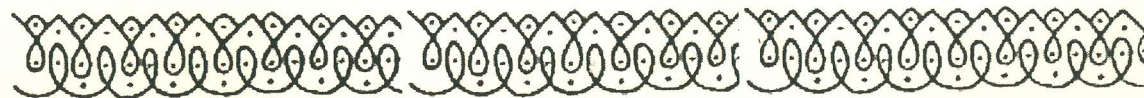
## rangoli

floor designing is primarily done as a symbol of ritualistic custom, which is bound up with ceremonial, it is always done on auspicious occasions, such as the festival days dedicated to various deities, shiva, vishnu, lakshmi, priti (the earth) the nagpanchmi (serpent festival), diwali, the new year, and the festival of lights, dusserah, holi and so on; worship for the welfare of the family, good harvest, during the celebration of marriages and births, and to bring prosperity to the home and remove evil. these designs are therefore drawn on the floor before the shrine in the prayer (puja) room, and on occasions along the route on which the deities are taken in procession on festival days.

generally done in free hand with the fingers, women use rice paste, which is considered auspicious (lime or chunam being added sometimes) and other lucky colours- the golden yellow of turmeric, the red and black of the earth ochre red (gheru) the green of crushed leaves, and the blue of indigo. this art is known as rangoli in maharashtra, sathia in gujerat, mandana in rajasthan, alpana in west bengal, aripan in bihar and orissa chowk in uttar pradesh, kolam in tamilnadu, and aniyal in kerala.



RANGOLI

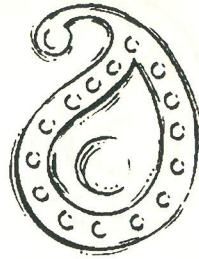






The typeface is inspired by the **rangoli**, **rangoli** is floor designing done in front of door. The simple form of rangoli which is used repetitively, is used at the end of the line in the letterform and the dots which is used to make the rangoli, are added in the counterpart of the letterform.

The typeface has become more like a graphic form or a design than the letterform. The typeface can be used for titles, subtitles for special and important words. It has become less readable. It cannot be used as paragraph text because of its less readability. It looks more ethnic because of the hand drawn lines used in it.

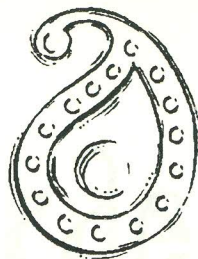


## kalamkari

is the craft of painted and printed fabrics from the southern state of andhra pradesh. it derives its name from the kalam or pen with which the patterns are traced, and is an art form that development both as a purely decorative one and also for religious ornamentation.

India is tremendously rich in craft and kalamkari or painting on cloth is not done only in masulipatnam and srikalahasti but in serval parts of India. but masulipatnam is different from the old kalamkari cloth painting. the beautiful designs in outline with sensitive forms of leaves, flowers, birds, geometrical patterns with rhythm and an inherent balance which immediately attracts the connoisseur and the lay man.



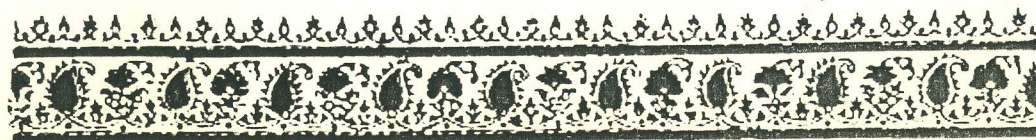


a b c d e f g

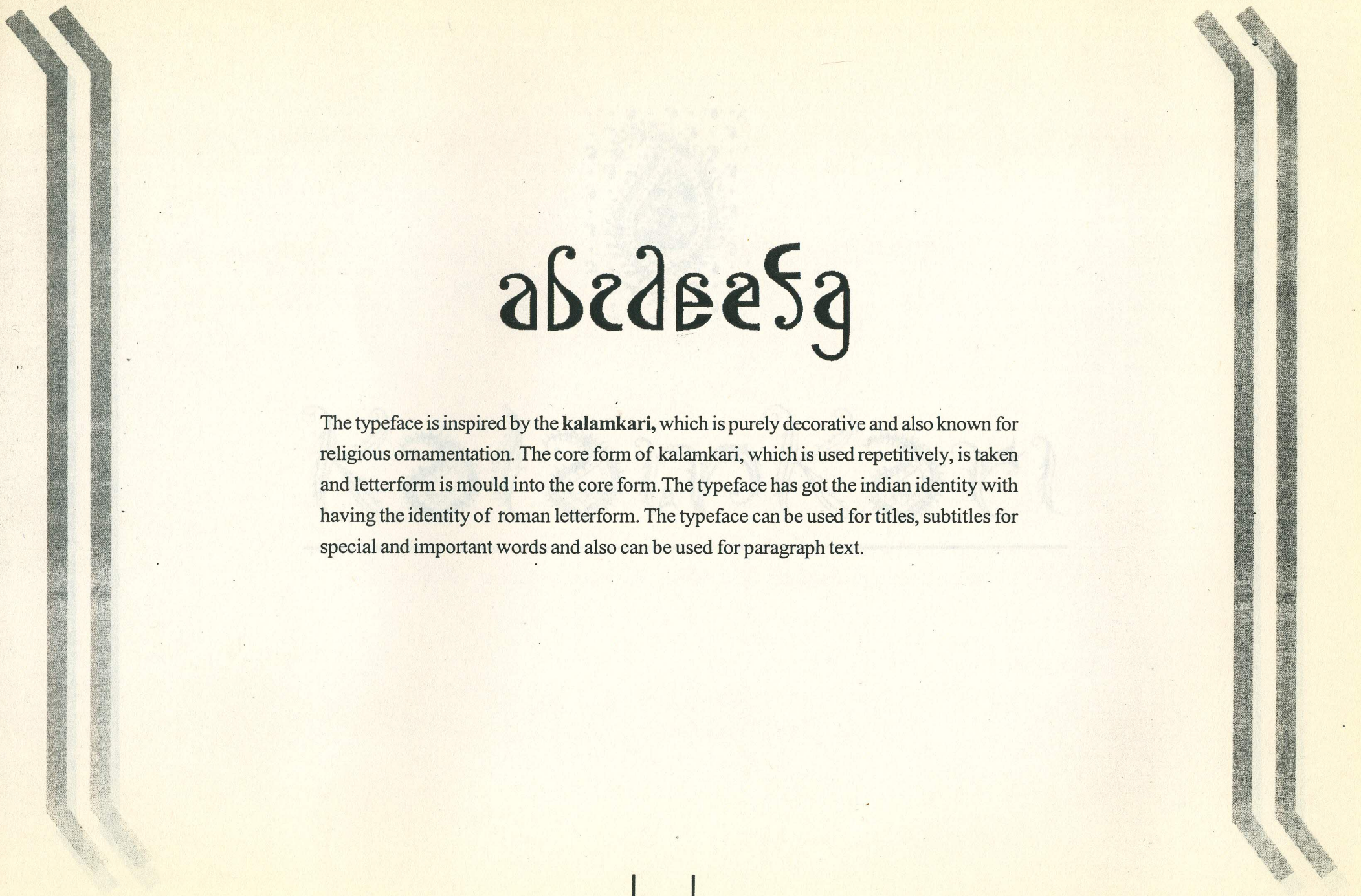
ascender

x-height

descender



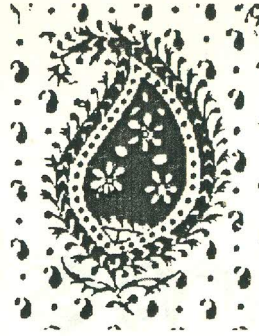




abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

The typeface is inspired by the **kalamkari**, which is purely decorative and also known for religious ornamentation. The core form of kalamkari, which is used repetitively, is taken and letterform is mould into the core form. The typeface has got the indian identity with having the identity of roman letterform. The typeface can be used for titles, subtitles for special and important words and also can be used for paragraph text.





Kalamkari

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# Kalamkari

This typeface is also inspired by the **kalamkari**, which is purely decorative and also known for religious ornamentation. Here all the letterforms are made with the original forms which are used in kalamkari. It looks as if the letterform is made with kalamkari process. The type face has become more ornamental and it has lost its identity as Raman letterform. The readability is also very less. This typeface cannot be used as paragraph text because of its less readability. It can be used for titles, subtitles for special and important words.





## metal casting in india

the discovery of a small bronze statue of a dancing girl from mohen jo daro [3rd millennium b.c. ]explains to us the knowledge Indians had in metal casting. history of India presents many glorious periods where all kinds of metal were handled giving sumptuous expression to mans aesthetic tastes.

the use of metal is common. in homes there are hundreds of objects in which metal is wholly or partly used like vases, vessels, cooking pots, jars, cups, saucers, sarificial vessels and lamps of different patterns.

all types of pots, jars, and lamps are made of brass, copper, bronze with lot of ornamentation on it. beautiful patterns of natural objects like leaves, flowers and also geometrical patterns are seen on the pots. pots and lamps also has nice handles of ornamental shapes, which are dynamic and having forceful curves, adding the beauty of the product.





naga kumbha deepa, a lamp with  
motifs of pot and serpent. height 19  
cm. 18 century, deccan



a votive lamp with a pilot lamp at top and serpent  
hoods behind the bowl  
height 14 cm. 17 century, deccan







deep jyoti

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ascender

x-height

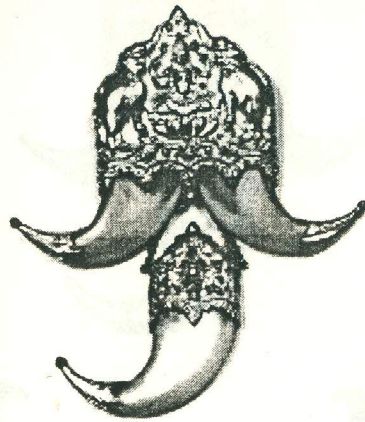
descender



# deep jyoti

This typeface is inspired by the **handles of ornamental shapes** of pots and lamps from India. The shape of handle is taken and it is incorporated on the place of serif. So the shape has become serif of the letterform. The typeface has changed its look with keeping its identity as roman letterform. It has also maintained its readability. By only changing the serif of the letterform one can change the look, identity of the original typeface. The typeface can be used for titles, subtitles for special and important words and also can be used for paragraph text.

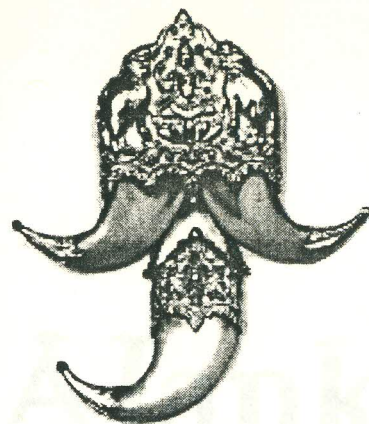




tiger claw jewellery

tiger claw jewellery has a long history in Hindu India. tigers claws are regarded as charms against evil. after killing a tiger people take out his claws as quickly as possible to make it into charms, which both woman and children wear

around their necks. they arrest the evil eye and keep of maladies. the brooch seen in the picture has three tiger claws set in sheet gold. and the goddess lakshmi being lusted by elephants is depicted on the brooch



Alankar

ascender

x-height

descender



# Alankar

This typeface is inspired by the **form of tiger claw jewellery**. The shape of claw is taken and it is incorporate on the place of serif. So the claw shape has become serif of the letterform. The typeface has changed its look with keeping its identity as roman letterform. It has also maintained its readability. By only changing the serif of the letterform one can change the look, identity of the original typeface. The typeface can be used for titles, subtitles for special and important words and also can be used for paragraph text.



# देवनागरी

## devnagari script

all Indian languages follows a very strong phonetic base the devnagari script has a traditional way of writing . also it has strong structural aspect the graphic representation of devnagari letterforms is also based on phonetic aspect

in devnagari script each letterform is composed of seven parts, as listed here.

शिरो रेखा[head line] उर्ध्व रेखा [top line]

नाभी रेखा [naval line] पद रेखा [base line] स्कंध रेखा [shoulder line]

जानू रेखा [knee line] तल रेखा [ground line]



देवनागरी

devnāgarī

ascender

x-height

descender



EXPLORATOR

This typeface is inspired by the **Devnagari script**. The similarities of both roman and devnagari letterforms are studied and the unique part of the devnagari script, Shirorekha (top line) is added in the roman typeface to make it look like devnagari typeface. The typeface looks like devnagari but it has lost its readability. The typeface can be used for titles, subtitles for special and important words.



EXPLORATORY

Sketches



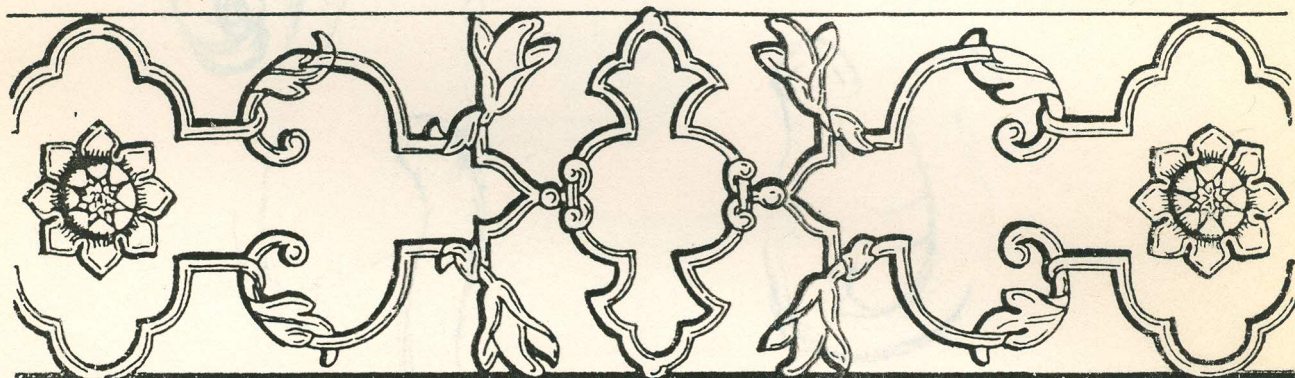


Plate 48

MONUMENTS AND EDIFICES (4). Stone Relief Work : 1, 2, 3, 4, Four panels from a decorative carving white in marble, combining geometrical and leaf patterns. Red Fort, Delhi. Moghul period, mid-17th century A.D.

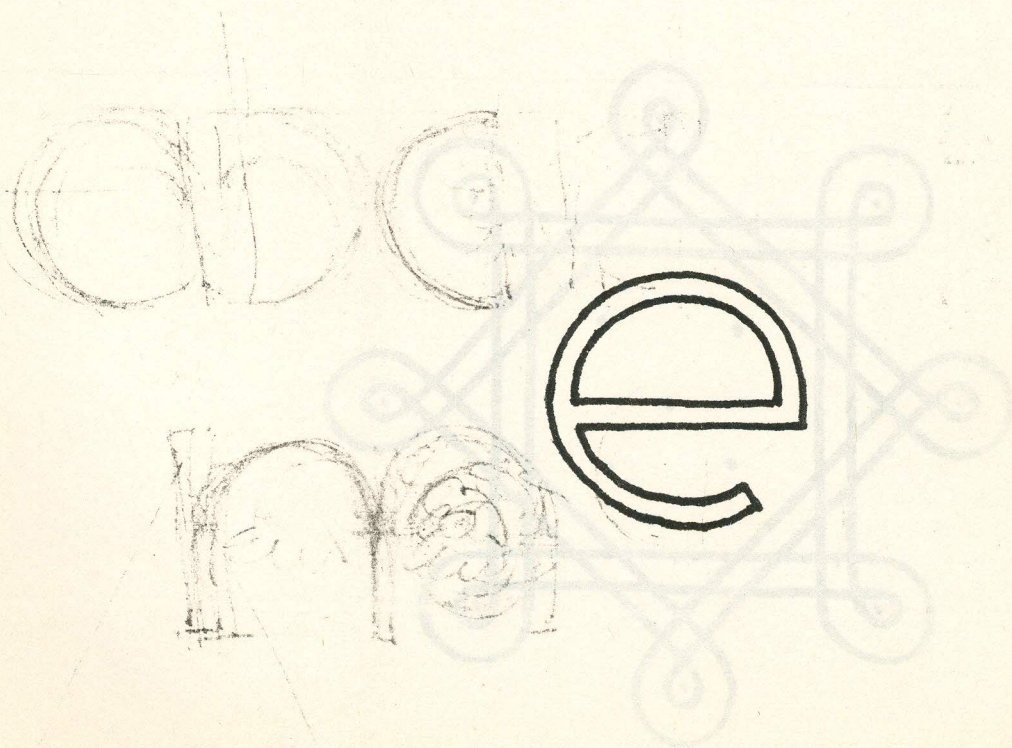
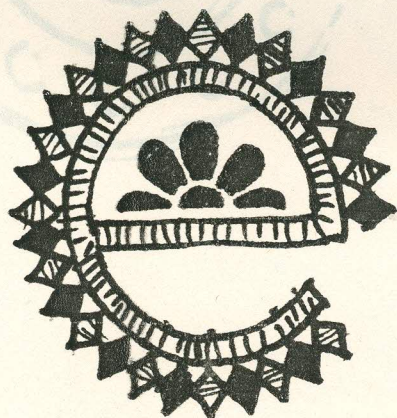




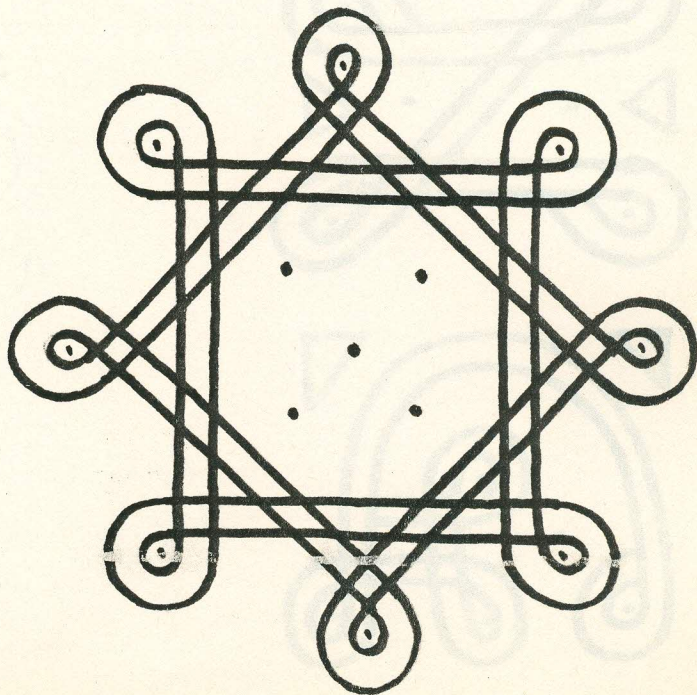
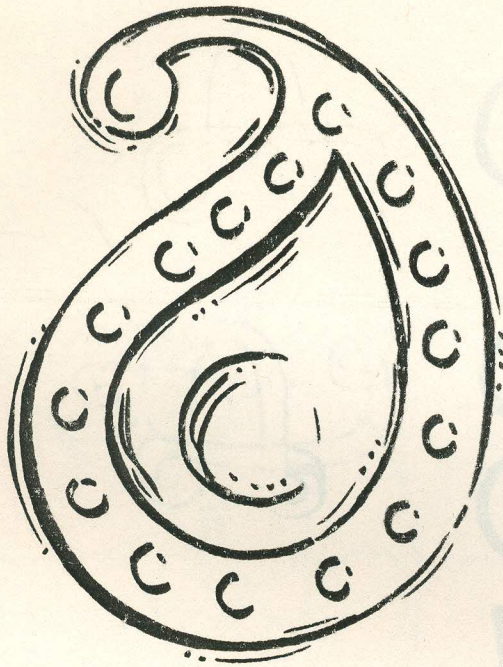


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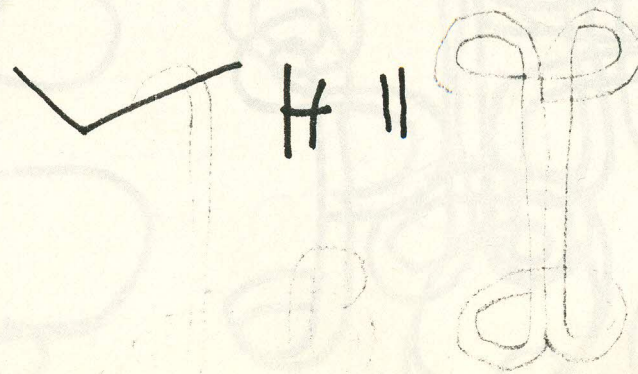
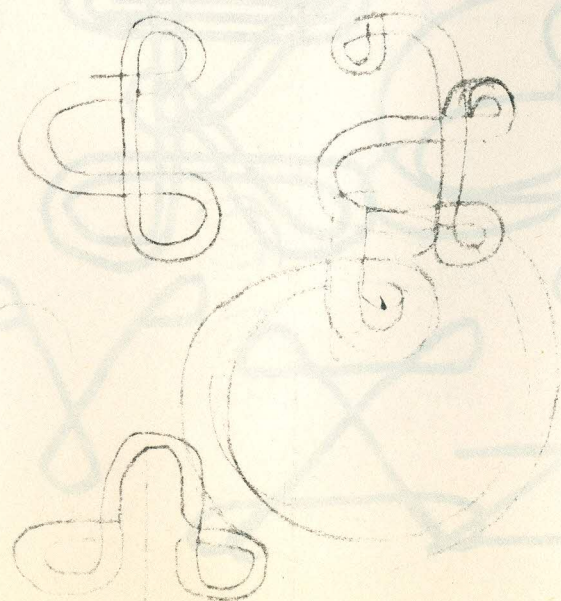
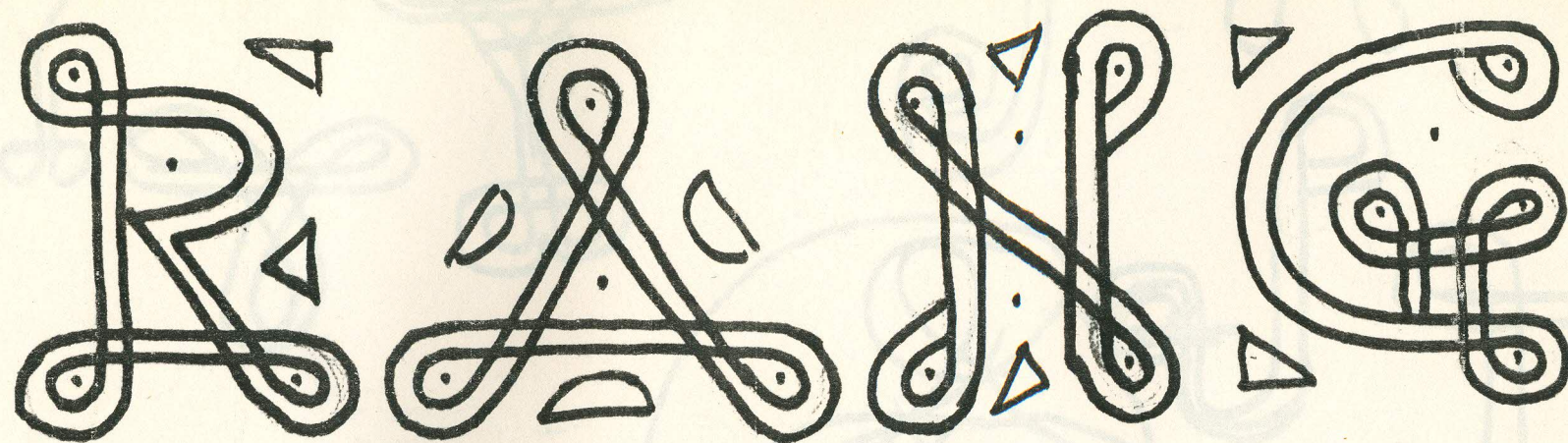






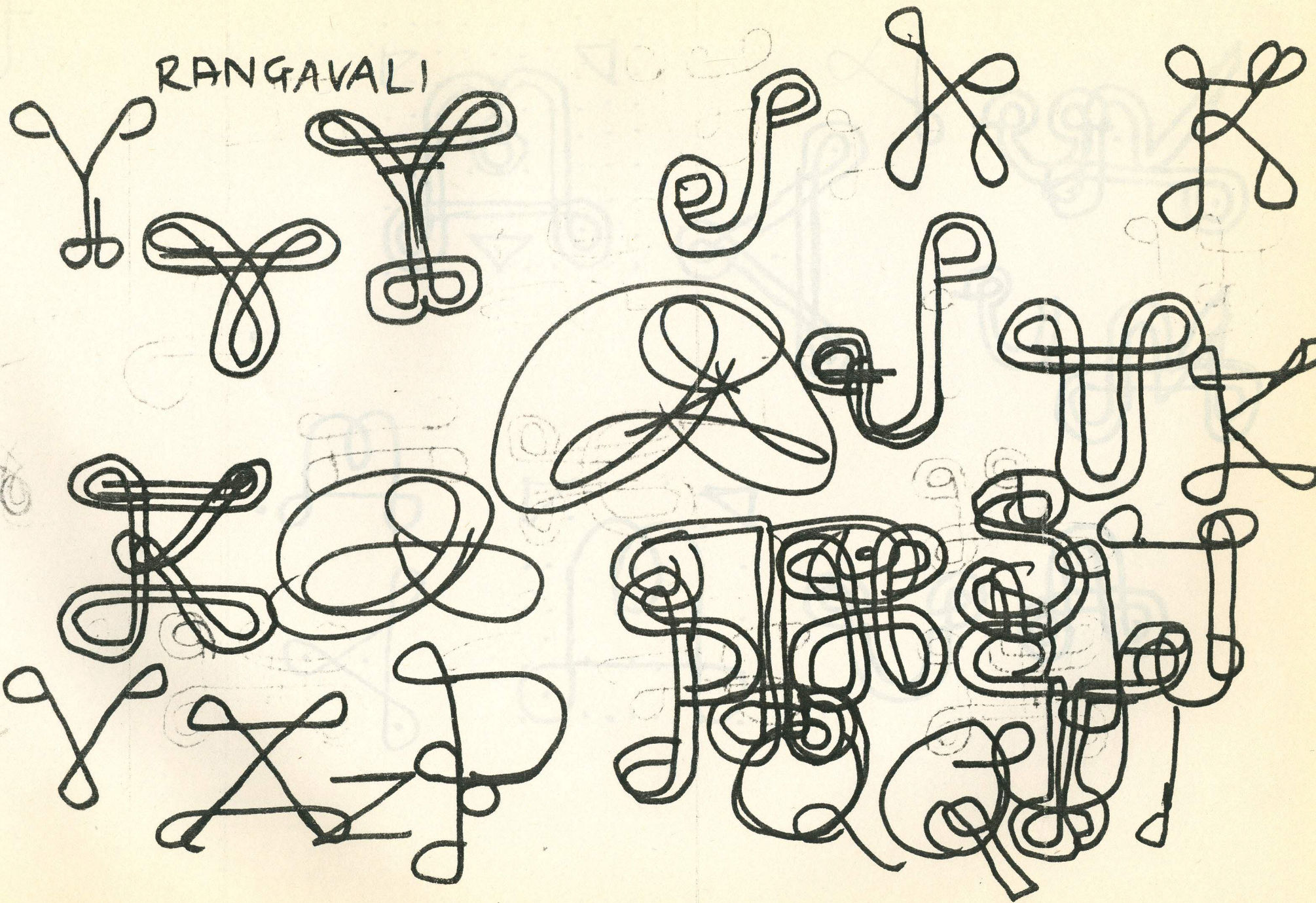


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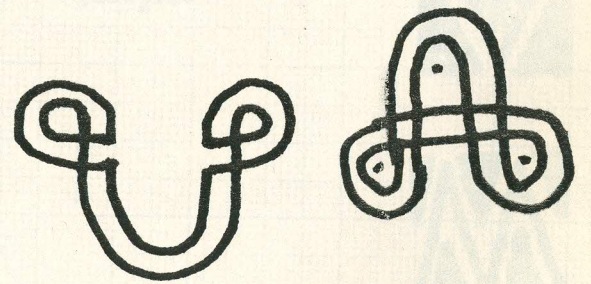
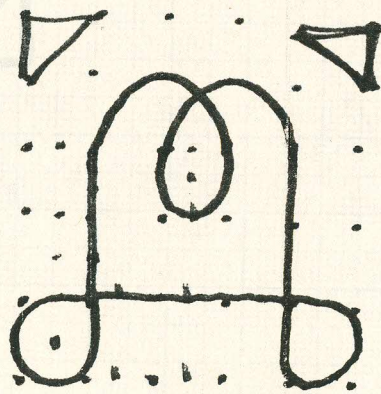
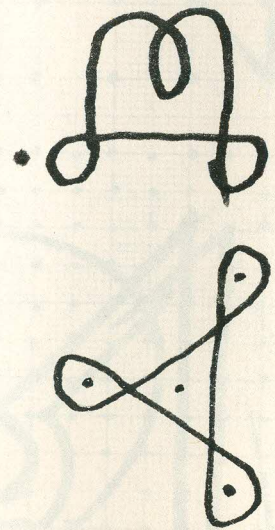
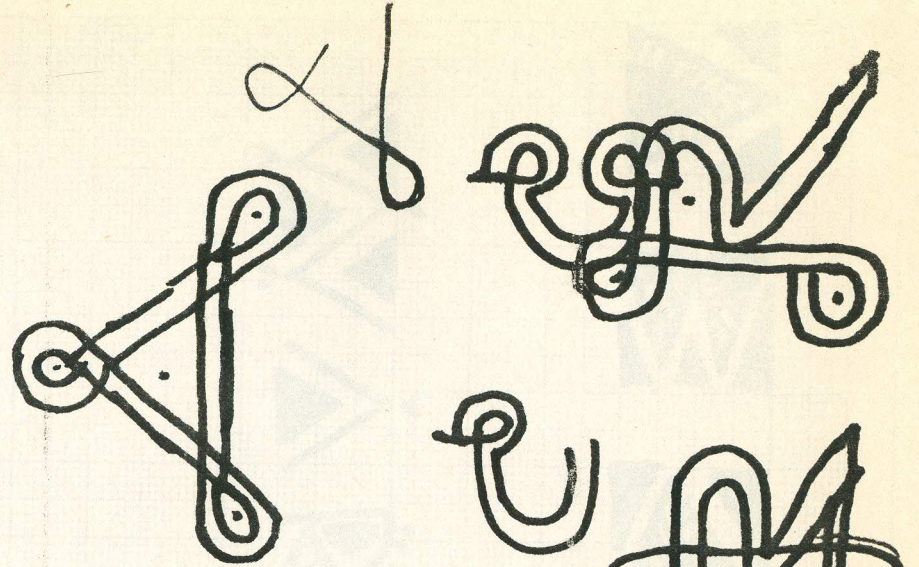
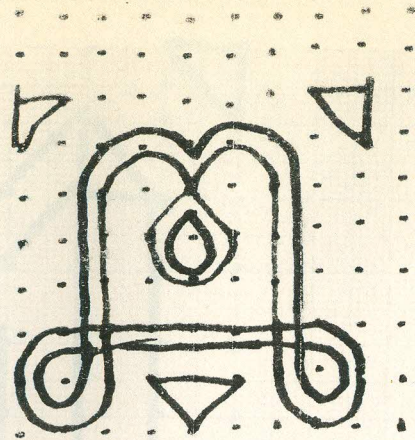




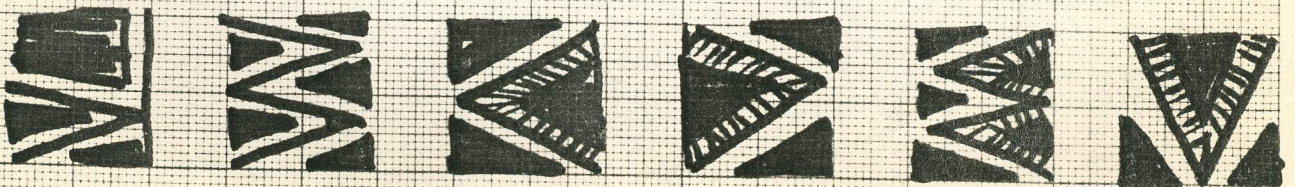
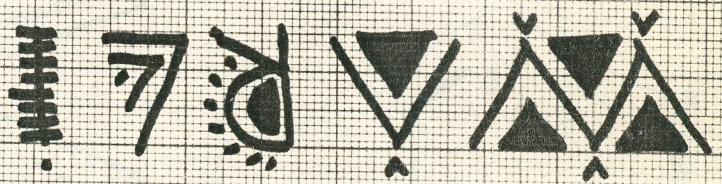
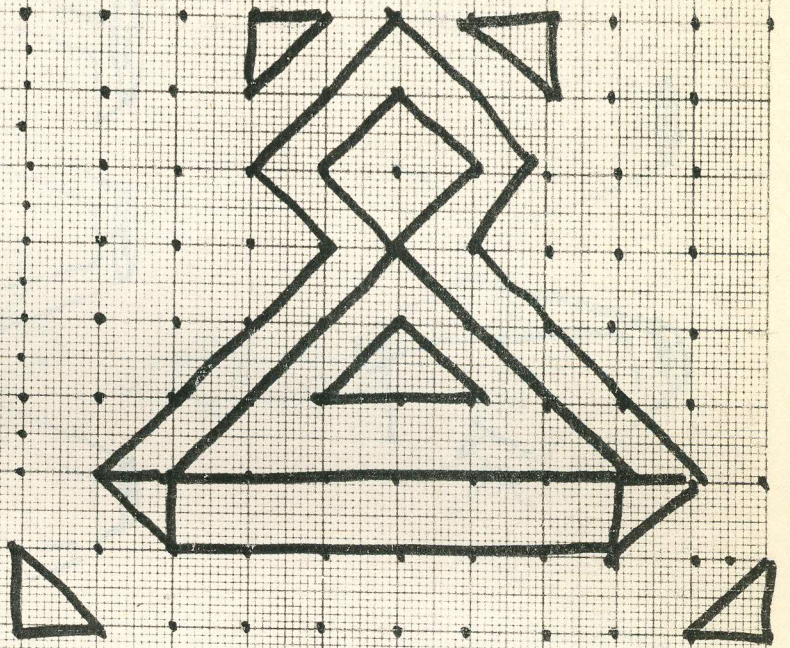
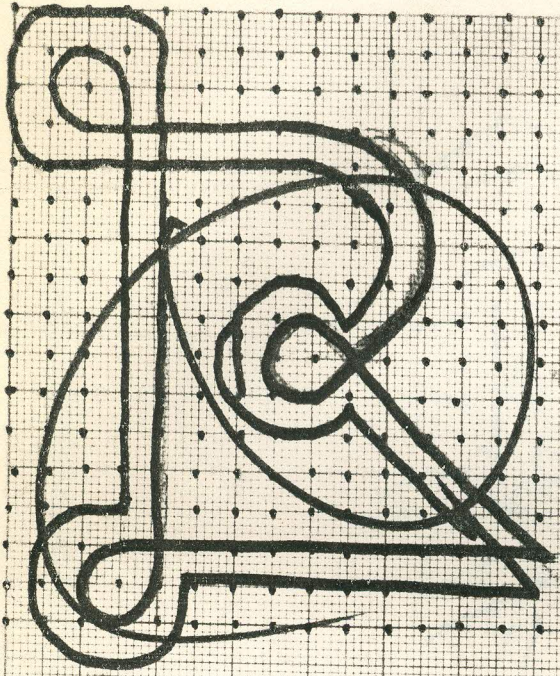
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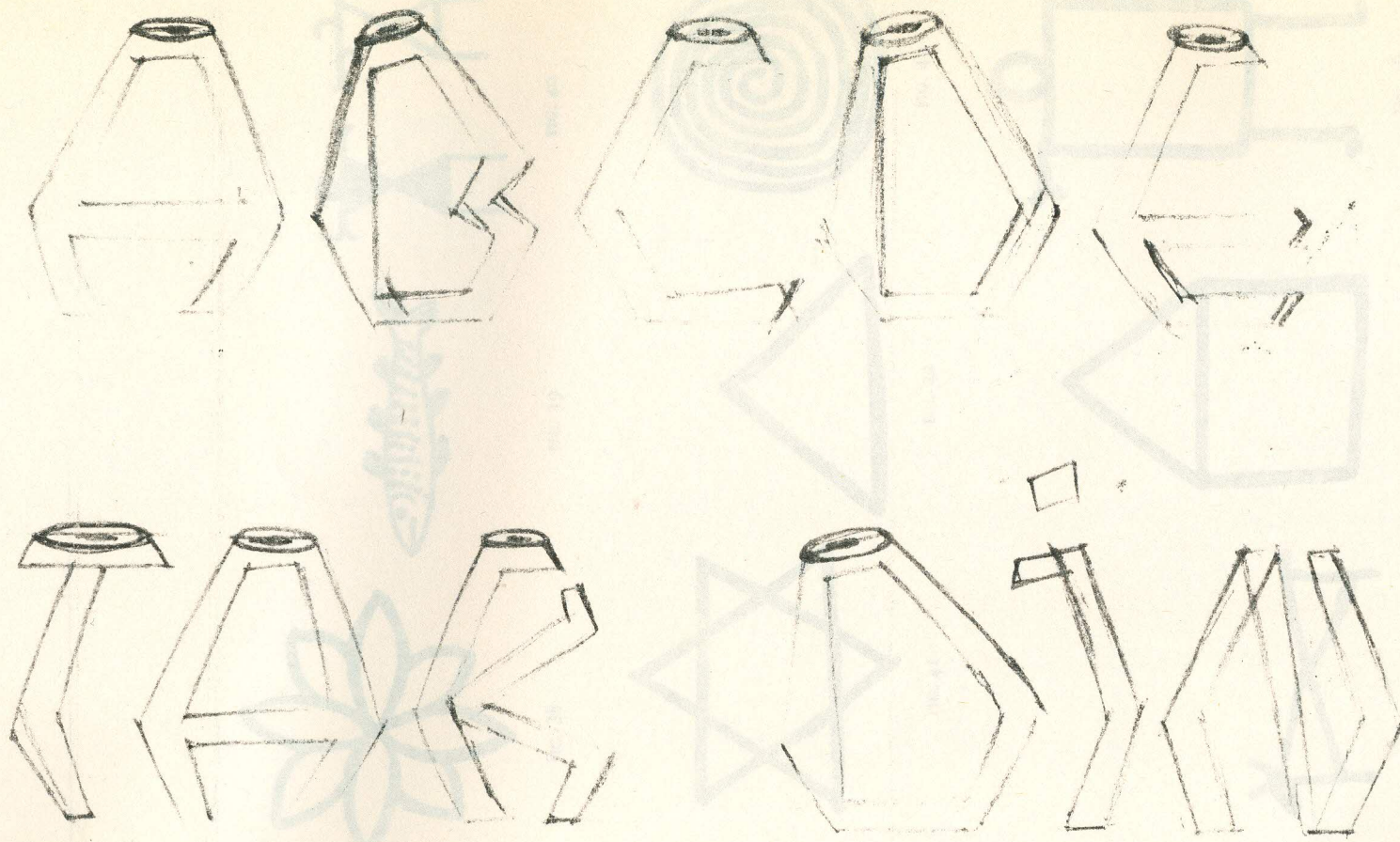














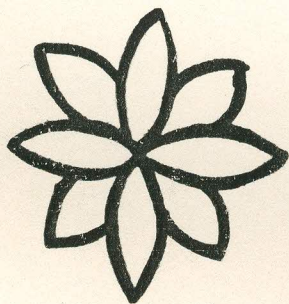


FIG. 38



FIG. 39

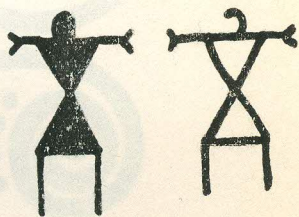


FIG. 40

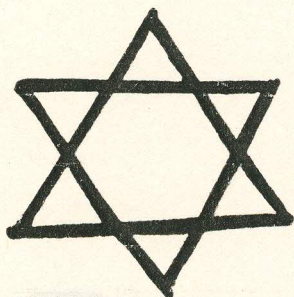


FIG. 41



FIG. 42



FIG. 43

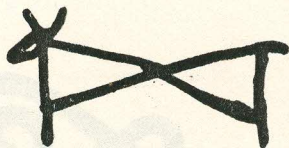


FIG. 44

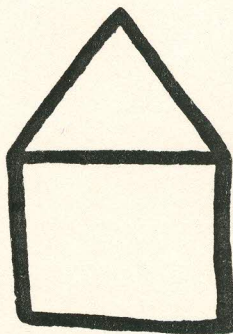


FIG. 45

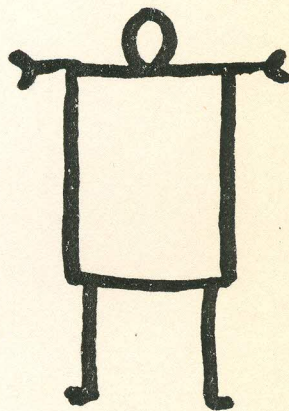


FIG. 46

38, Astadala motif—symbol of Lord Viṣṇu; 39, fish—a female fertility symbol; 40, human figures (male and female); 41, a star motif; 42, a shrine motif; 43, the helicoidal sphere—an abstract symbol of the Moon; 44, a cow motif; 45, a temple motif; 46, a male human figure.

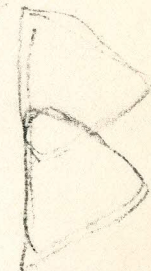
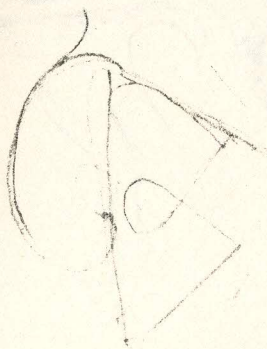
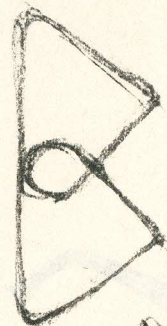
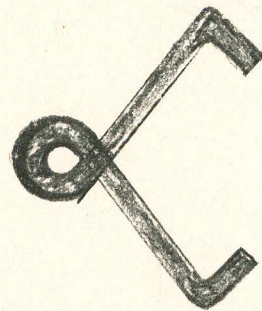
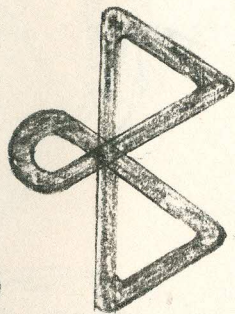
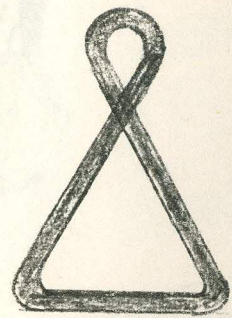


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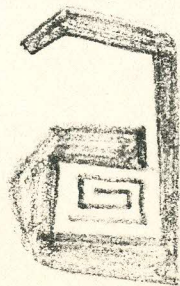
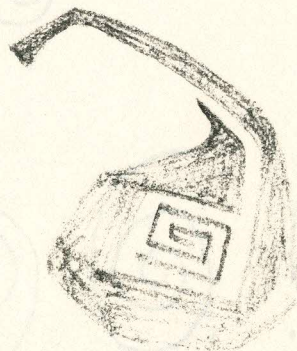
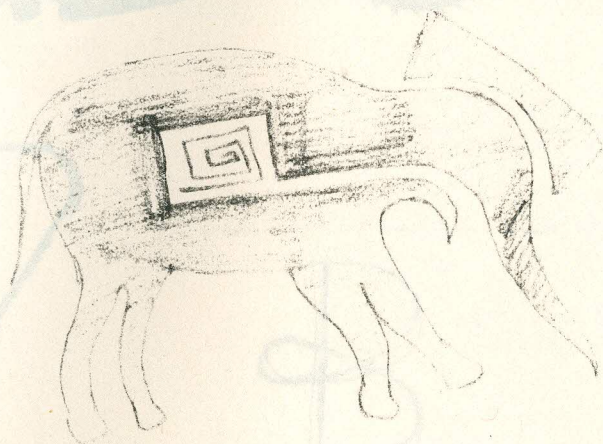
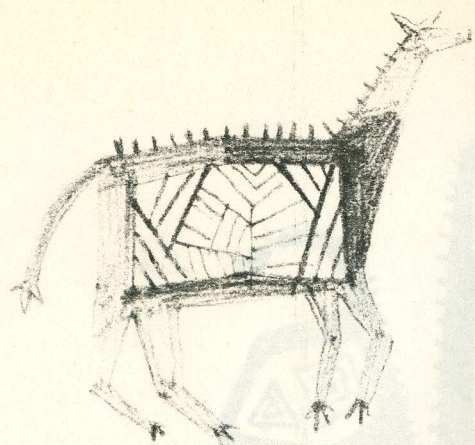
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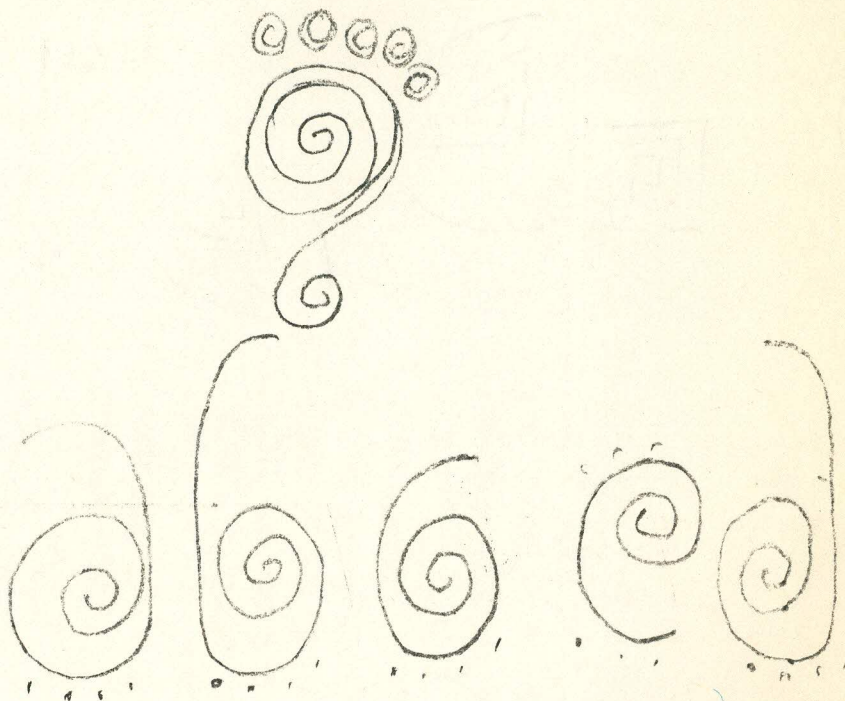
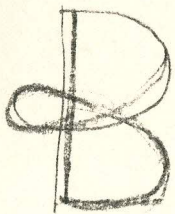
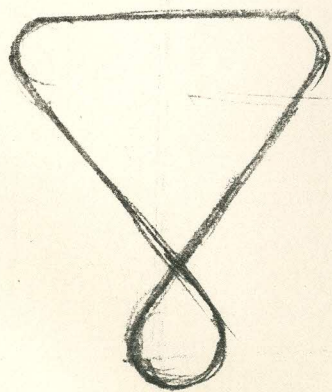
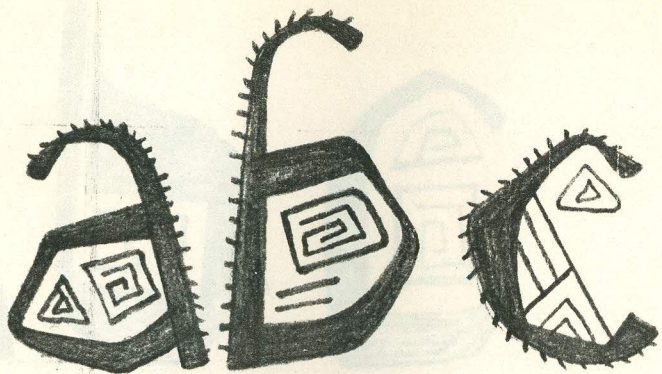








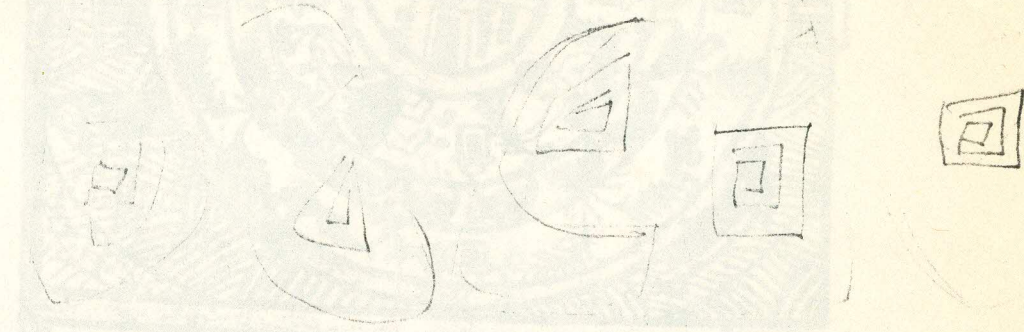
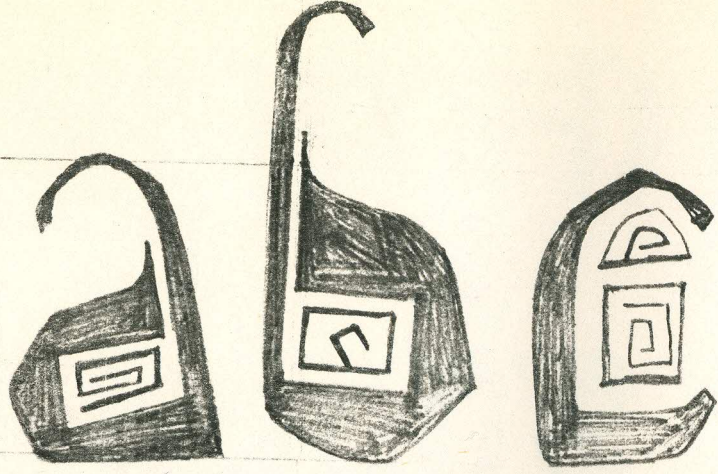






76. The four gates of Jambudvīpa opening on to the ocean;  
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{Couché on paper, XVIII<sup>th</sup> century, 14 (approx.)









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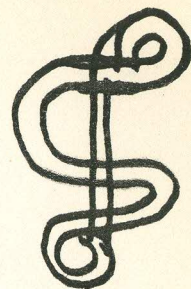
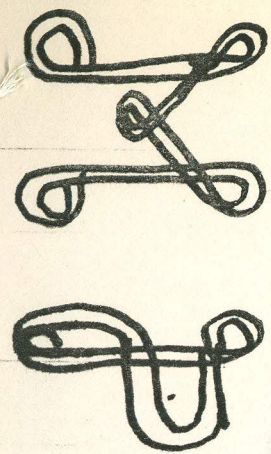
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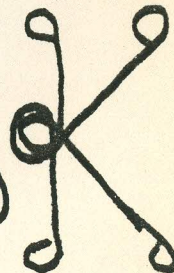
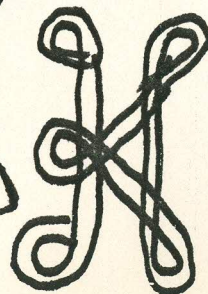
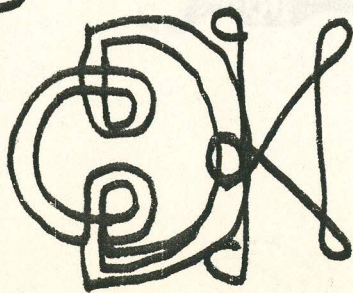
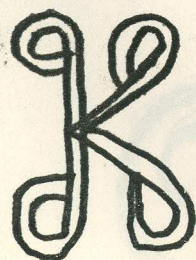
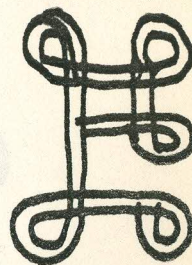
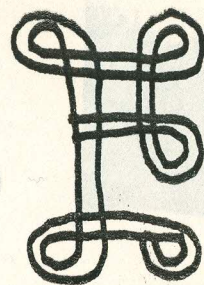
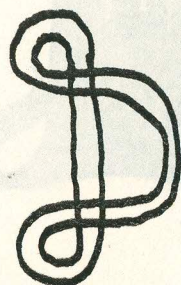
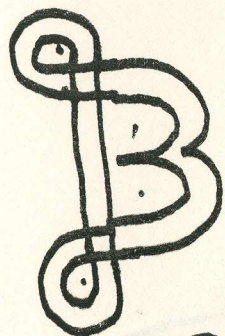
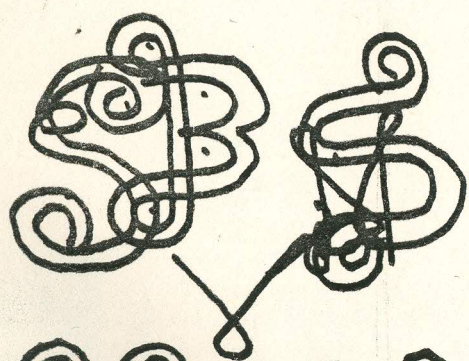
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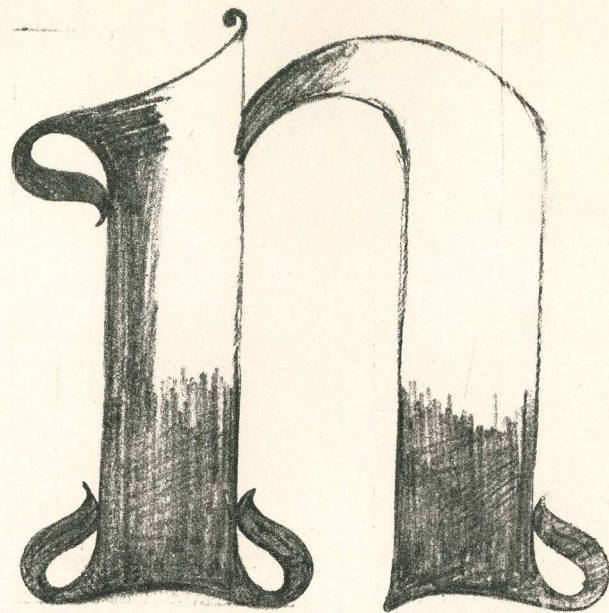
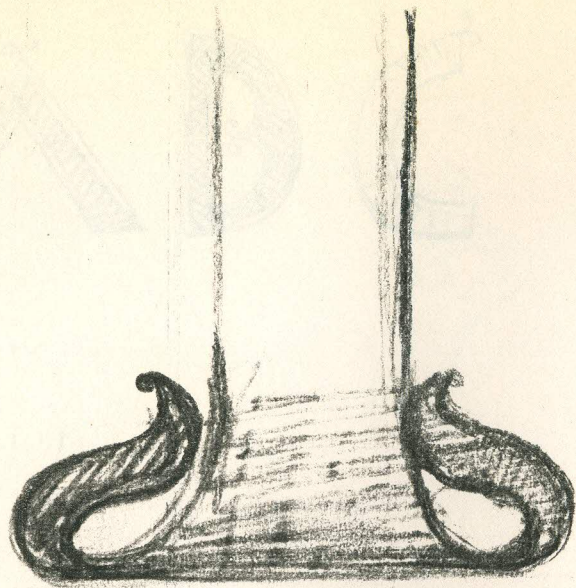




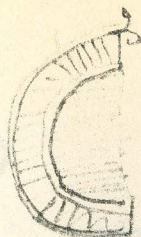
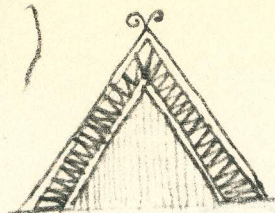
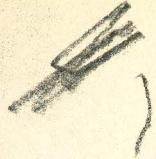
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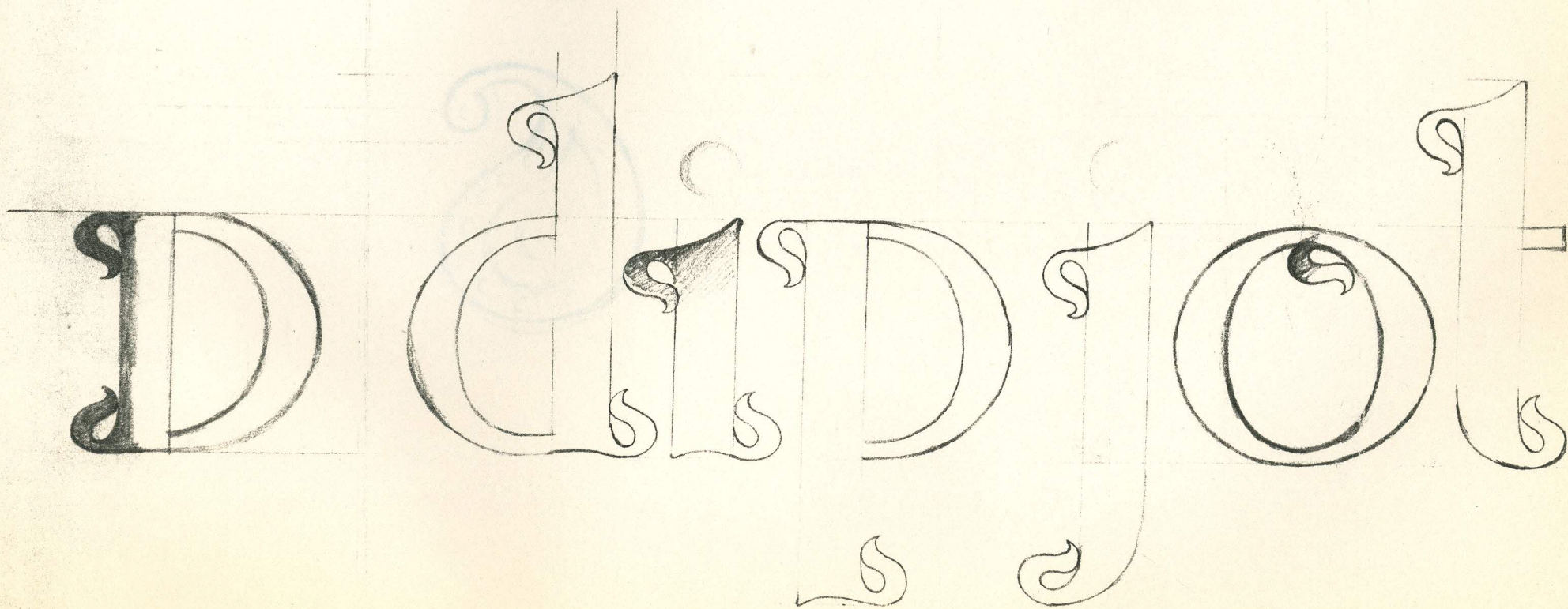








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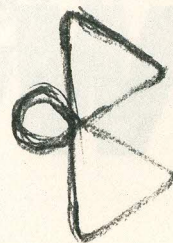
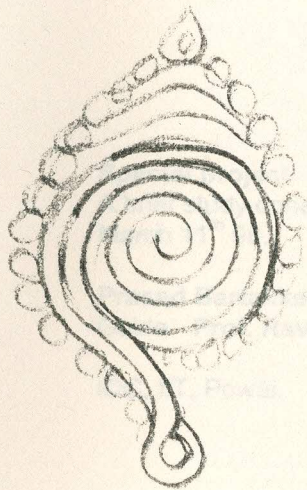
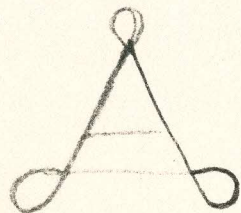
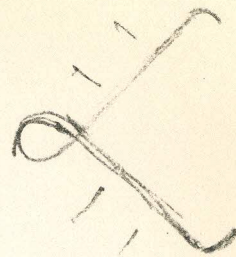
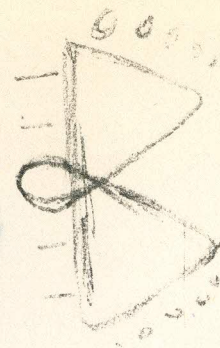
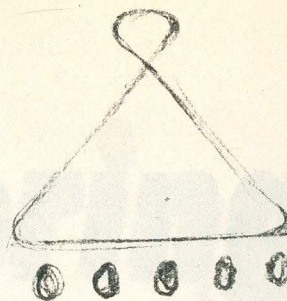
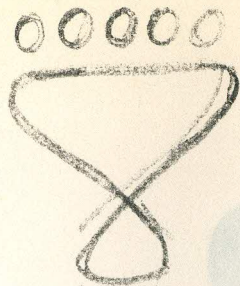
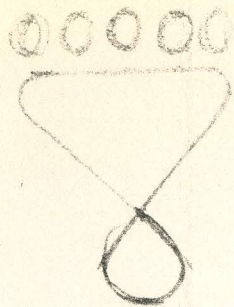
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