

Inspiration = Conversation with my mother

Background

Over 35 million people worldwide speak the language, Kannada. The first written record in the Kannada language is traced to 230 BC. Today, the Kannada language is written using the Kannada script, which is curvy.

The Kannada script has entered the Web medium. Recently, content providers, such as Yahoo, Google, Microsoft, and AOL, are looking at local content as the solution to reach out to specific user groups.

Readability is the main concern of text appearing in large volumes on the screen. There is a limit to which a type can differ from its accepted skeleton before it becomes uncomfortable to read.

When a type is designed, two main aspects, legibility and elegance, should be looked at. It is essential for someone who knows the language and is familiar with the script to design a typeface to make it look elegant.

Relevance

Although a lot of existing Kannada typefaces are imposed upon the grid of the display unit, there is no Kannada typeface that has been designed pixel by pixel, for the Web, with the screen grid.

Challenges

1. Right decisions have to be taken when the forms are derived on the grid.
2. * Every akshara in the Kannada script can be categorized according to their forms irrespective of the fact whether it is a vowel or a consonant.
3. Compatibility is a major issue. How would the Kannada typeface look on a browser loaded in a PDA, PocketPC or any Web-enabled device?
4. Thorough understanding of letterforms is necessary.

Mother: What are you doing?
Me: I am reading news on Yahoo Kannada, online.
Mother: Yahoo Kannada? Oh!
Me: Yahoo offers Kannada content now.
Mother: Let me try reading, too.

Meanwhile I observe her reactions...

Mother: Seems like they are still working on the page. The text looks rough and not smooth. It is uncomfortable to read.
Me: Would you use Yahoo if the letters are smooth and text is comfortable to read?
Mother: Maybe...

Objective

To design a Kannada typeface Chukki, creating the letterforms by decisively laying pixels for the computer screen.

Deliverables

1. Font file: PC version
2. Blog: Documentation of process
3. Booklet: Making of the typeface

Letters are things,
not pictures of things.
Eric Gill, Type Designer

■ Chukki, in Kannada, means Dot

* Suresh provided this insight in the jury of my senior, Asutosh

Document Created on Dec 12, 2007 | Version 1.0 | Typeface used: Fleftex Mono | NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF DESIGN

STUDIO 4
A Kannada typeface for the Web
View blog at chukki.wordpress.com

chukki

PROCESS

01. Understanding Kannada script
02. Understanding the technology
03. Case Studies: Analyzing existing screentypes
04. Hand drawn analysis of character set
05. Analyzing and marking peculiarities of the script with respect to grid
06. Defining design criteria
07. Categorizing the aksharas according to the forms and proportions
08. Preliminary sketches
09. Recording design guidelines
10. Design

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