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Typography in Publication Design

Typesetting capabilities for Indian scripts in Adobe Creative Suite applications

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Abstract: In this paper I will outline the current options for typesetting Indian scripts in Adobe's popular Creative Suite applications.

Key words: typography, digital typesetting, software, Indian scripts, Indian languages, Unicode, fonts, Adobe Creative Suite, instructions.

1. Introduction

The last couple of major releases of Adobe's popular Creative Suite (CS) software have included some capabilities for typesetting Indian scripts in some of its most popular design applications. InDesign, Photoshop, and Illustrator have all been enabled to support several Indian scripts, including Devanagari, Bengali, Gujarati, Gurmukhi, Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu, Kannada, and Odiya. Unfortunately, it seems that not many CS users in India are aware of the potential for setting type using local scripts. This is most likely because support for these scripts is not typically installed automatically, but requires some additional files and setup on the part of the user.

2. Typesetting capabilities of various Creative Suite versions

2.1 A note on fonts

Before I continue, I should mention that the Adobe design applications mentioned above require Unicode-encoded fonts with advanced OpenType features to work properly. India has a rich history of publication design and for much of the digital age, home-grown proprietary typesetting solutions were the norm for high-end typography for Indian scripts. The drawback of many of these systems is that they rely on custom encoded fonts to provide the correct appearance for text. These fonts are not interchangeable with other systems and are a barrier to efficient exchange of information. At present, Unicode has become widely accepted as the standard for information exchange in publications and on

the internet. OpenType is a font format that supports the Unicode standard and also provides for programming to be added to the font so as to support the features of complex scripts as well as typographic options. Unfortunately, it can often be difficult finding high quality OpenType fonts for Indian scripts. Adobe currently offers one font family—Adobe Devanagari—which was designed primarily with Hindi in mind. Microsoft ships several typefaces for a wide range of Indian scripts in OpenType format and some local foundries have also begun producing and selling OpenType fonts.

2.2 Current application support levels

Procuring suitable fonts may possibly be the hardest part of the process for using Adobe Creative Suite apps for typesetting Indian languages. Once the designer has these, the rest of the process is fairly simple. I should first mention that the Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) versions of Creative Suite have offered Indian script shaping support from version CS4. In order to typeset Indian languages in this environment, the user merely needs to ensure that the World-Ready (WR) composer is activated. Similarly, WR services can be activated for non-MENA versions of Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign from version CS4 using templates, scripting, or plug-ins. Thomas Phinney, former Product Manager for Fonts and Global Typography at Adobe, has documented how to leverage this approach in an article on his blog. (2009)

The most recent version of InDesign CS 5.5 also adds the capability of adding spelling and hyphenation support for Indian languages. In order to enable these features, InDesign users can download open source dictionaries from the OpenOffice.org website² and install them to be used for reference by InDesign. (Sousa, 2011; OpenOffice.org)

3. Conclusion

It is hoped that in the future that Adobe will be able to take all of these language support options mentioned above and build them into the default versions of applications so that they come pre-installed for even greater ease of use. Likewise, it is hoped that these applications will continue to add more features that are currently unavailable including support for language-specific glyph variants and hyphenation options.

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