LOOKING BACK FOR A WAY FORWARD:
Bringing the Indian Design language Back in Fashion

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INTRODUCTION

Grids in visual design are often described as a system of geometric patterns, which guide the designers to create a visual with a better layout. From drafting a letter to creating an edifice, a grid provides cohesion, coherence, and structure to design. It can be defined as a compositional design matrix for controlling the placement of typography and imagery.

The grids used in the current design scenario are useful, practical and popular. But, they seem to lack a unique language that will create truly indigenous designs. The perceived barrier in the advancement of design in India is the global referencing of design in our teaching and implementation, ignoring a design language that is uniquely Indian. It is the lack of knowledge of our own design history, which restricts the budding designer to understand our indigenous culture and translate it into a language that is uniquely Indian; to bring the knowledge of our past back in fashion.

This research is a codicological and observational art based research. An analytical study of grid systems, design structure and their philosophy in the cultural and historical context. The focus of the research is Jain manuscripts of Rajasthan and Gujarat origin, which posses the rich treasure of ancient visual art form of grid systems in India. The aim is to study various types of manuscripts in depth various with a clear design structure and to analyze whether there is a clear pattern that can be co-opted into a cohesive design philosophy, eventually culminating in the decolonization of design.

Swastik   *Kolam*   *Janampatri*

Sriyantra   *Chakravyuh*   *Padmavyuh*

Yagnakund   *Mahavedi*   *Athiratham Mahavedi*

Figure 1- Examples of Grid in Symbolism & Cultural Totems of India

METHODOLOGY

To understand the parameters of grids in graphic design the listing of the parameters of evaluating grids in graphic design from secondary data was done and the list was sent to the graphic designers for the ranking of the important parameters. In order to gain insight, literature was reviewed from Jain manuscripts and various writings were explored. The listing of the manuscripts was done from secondary sources and the list was sent to Jain manuscript experts for the purpose of ranking the important

manuscripts. The manuscripts to be looked upon were finalised. Finally a conclusive study followed to make structures from the manuscripts and categorize them.

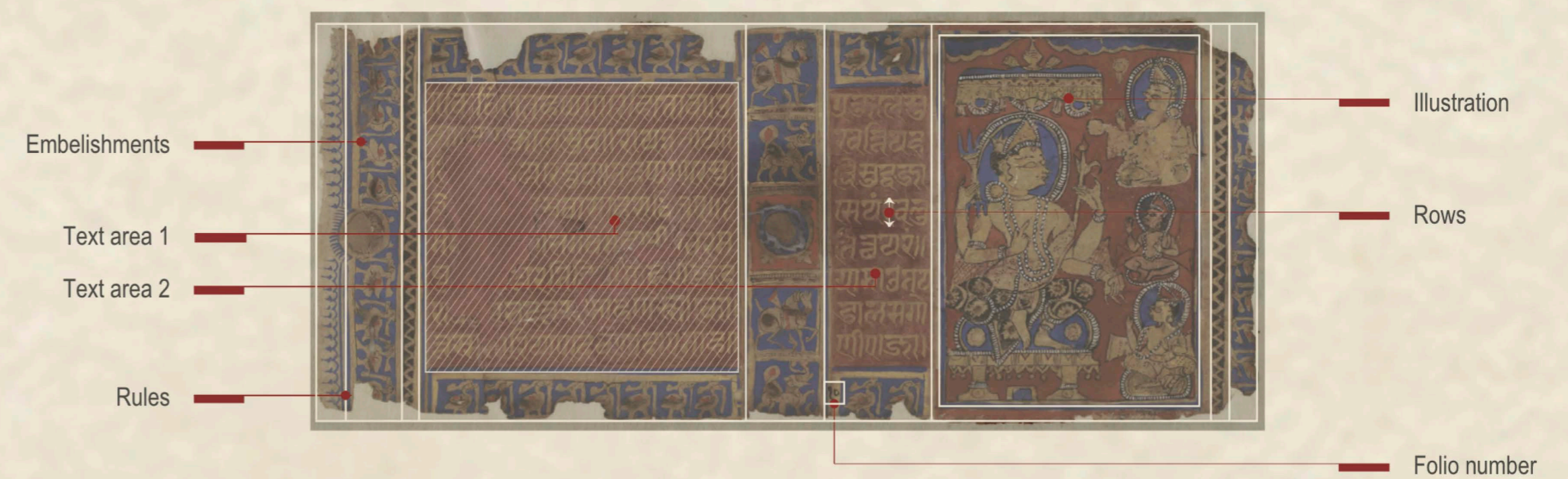### Anatomy of a Folio from Jain scripture

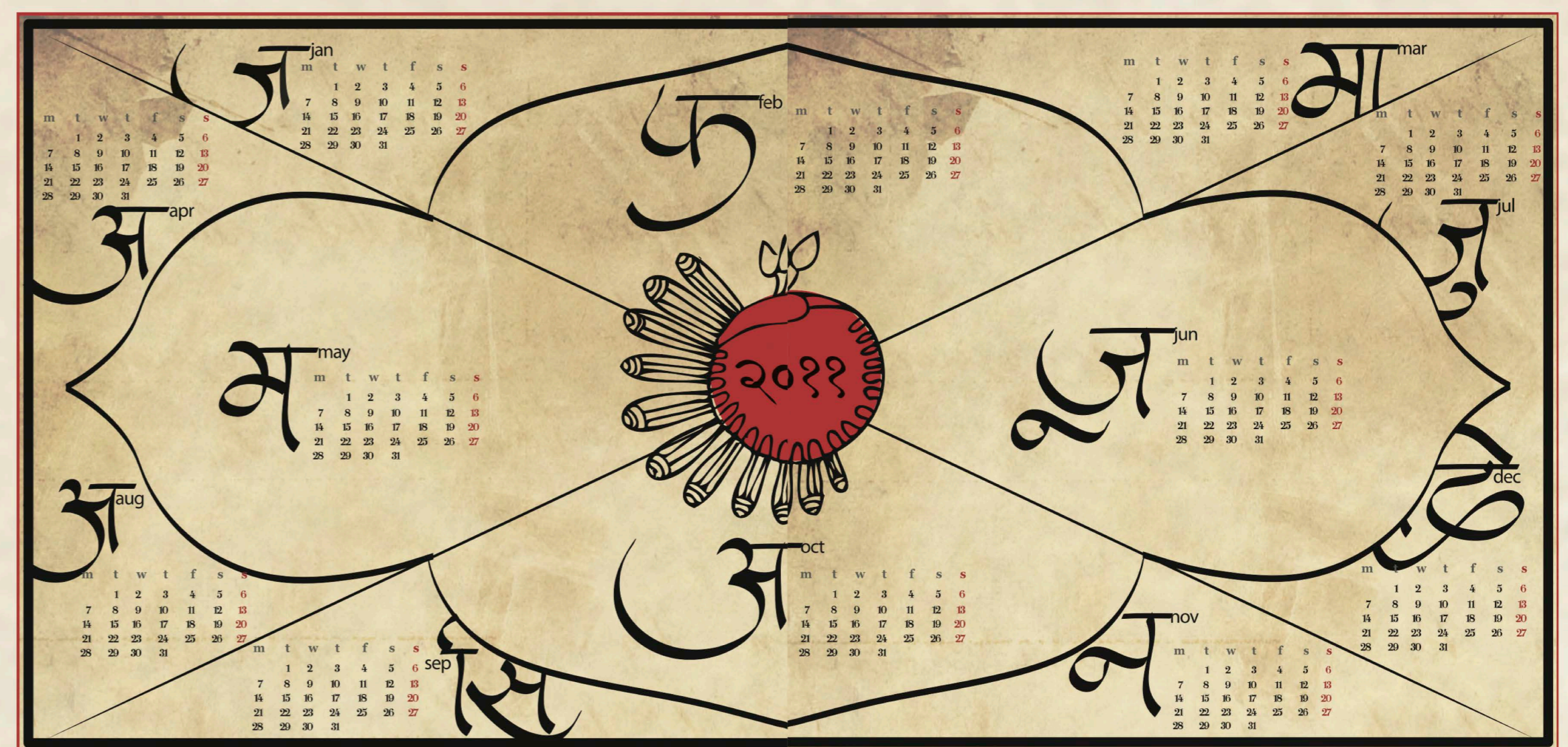Figure 2- Anatomy of a Folio from Jain Manuscript

Figure 3- Use of Janampatri Grid to Design a Year at a Glance for NIFT Promotional Collatral

CONCLUSION

The study of framework of the basic anatomy of folios of Jain manuscripts highlighted the evidence of existence of elements such as margins, columns, rows, page numbering, image & non-image areas, illustrations, decorative & symbolic elements, main text & commentary notes. The folios displayed variation in content. The abstract patterns produced by the geometric lines of the composition are in intimate correspondence with the essence and ultimate substance of form-display that they may therefore have besides their structural function, which in itself has an inherent symbolic value. The study also revealed the structural mechanism based on certain geometric/ aesthetic laws.

It is perhaps as right a time as any to look back and attempt to incorporate the uniqueness of our design history into modern design education, thus tapping into a source of the Indian aesthetic language, replete with the depth of philosophical thought and the interconnectedness of all things.

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