

in
ancient Indian languages



ARYA SAMAJ

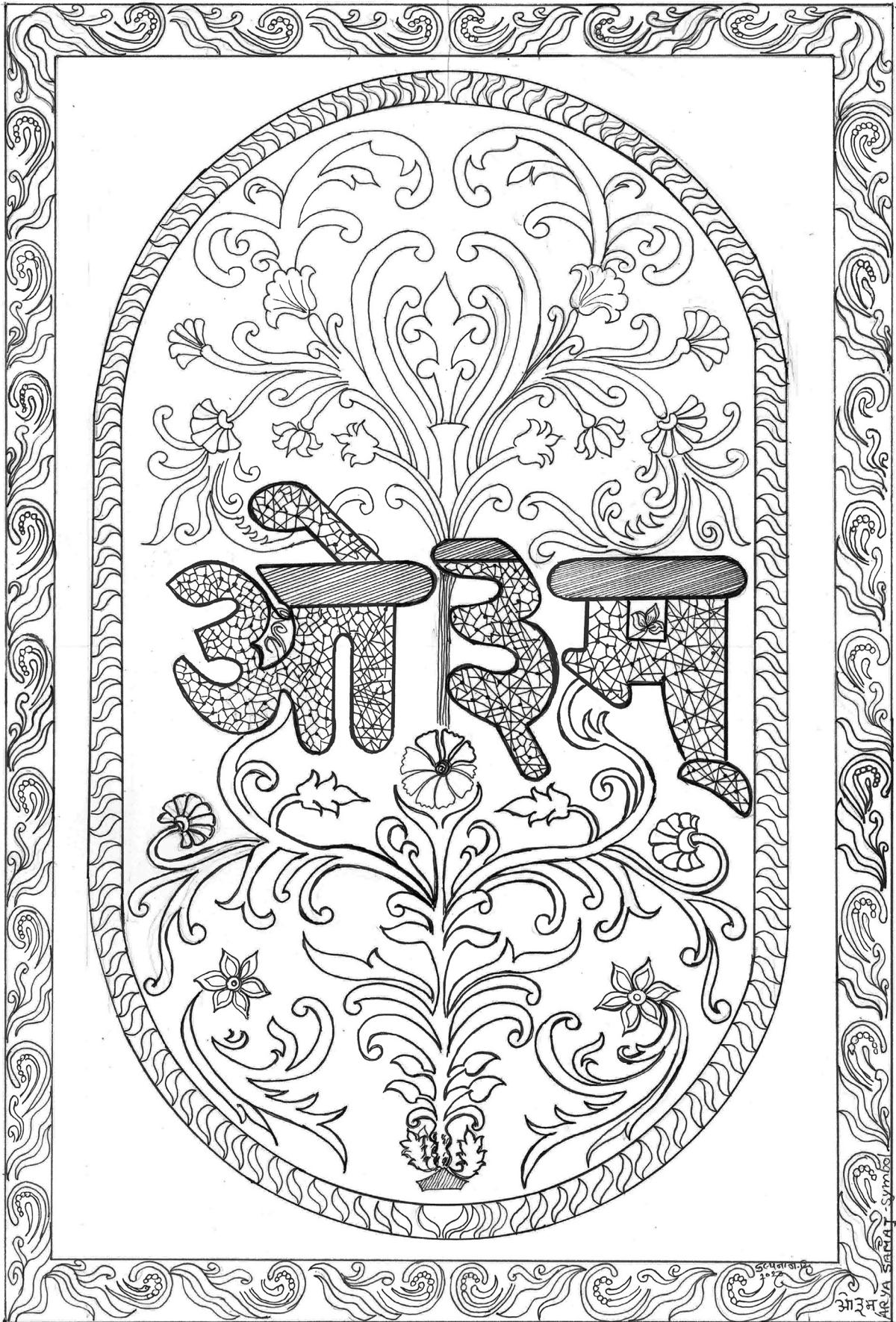
SYMBOL

Arya Samaj ('Society of Nobles') is a monotheistic modern Indian Hindu Reform Movement that upholds values and practices whose core belief adheres to the unequivocal authority of the Vedas (the earliest Hindu scriptures/texts) as revealed truth. The Samaj was founded by sanyasi (ascetic), Indian philosopher, and social reform leader Dayananda Saraswati, and was officially established by him in Bombay on April 10, 1875. Since its inception, the Samaj played a major role in the growth of the Indian national movement. Arya Samaj has a significantly large following (an estimated eight million) in almost all the major Indian cities and in rural areas as well, especially in western and northern India.

Arya Samaj opposes idol worship, animal sacrifice, rituals on behalf of ancestors, casteism based on birth, untouchability, child marriage, pilgrimages, priestly duties, and temple offerings. It upholds the infallibility of the Vedas, the concepts of *karma* (the accumulated effect of past deeds) and *samsara* (the process of death and rebirth), the sacredness of the cow, the significance of the *samskaras* (individual sacraments), the potency of Vedic offerings to the fire, and programs of social reform. The Samaj has strongly supported and promoted female education and intercaste marriage; has built missions, orphanages, and homes for widows and campaigned for widow remarriage; has established a network of Vedic schools and colleges; and has undertaken philanthropic work including famine relief and medical work.

Arya Samaj believes in one creator – God revered as the syllable 'Aum' as mentioned in the Yajur Veda. Au-ॐ-m (Aum) is believed to be the highest and most befitting name of God – the One who is Omniscient, Omnipresent, Omnipotent, source of all that is Just, Blissful, and Merciful, and of Intelligence.

The Aum symbol is interpreted as the most untainted base of life and everything that is. It is eternal knowledge and language, infinite and without end. Indian spiritual science explains that it was sound that was God's first creation and from it came the world. This sound made up our entire existence. All matter is supposed to have started from sound and Aum is the holiest of all sounds, being the syllable that predated the universe. Aum is depicted here amidst vegetation.



आरंभ
ARABH



BRAHMI

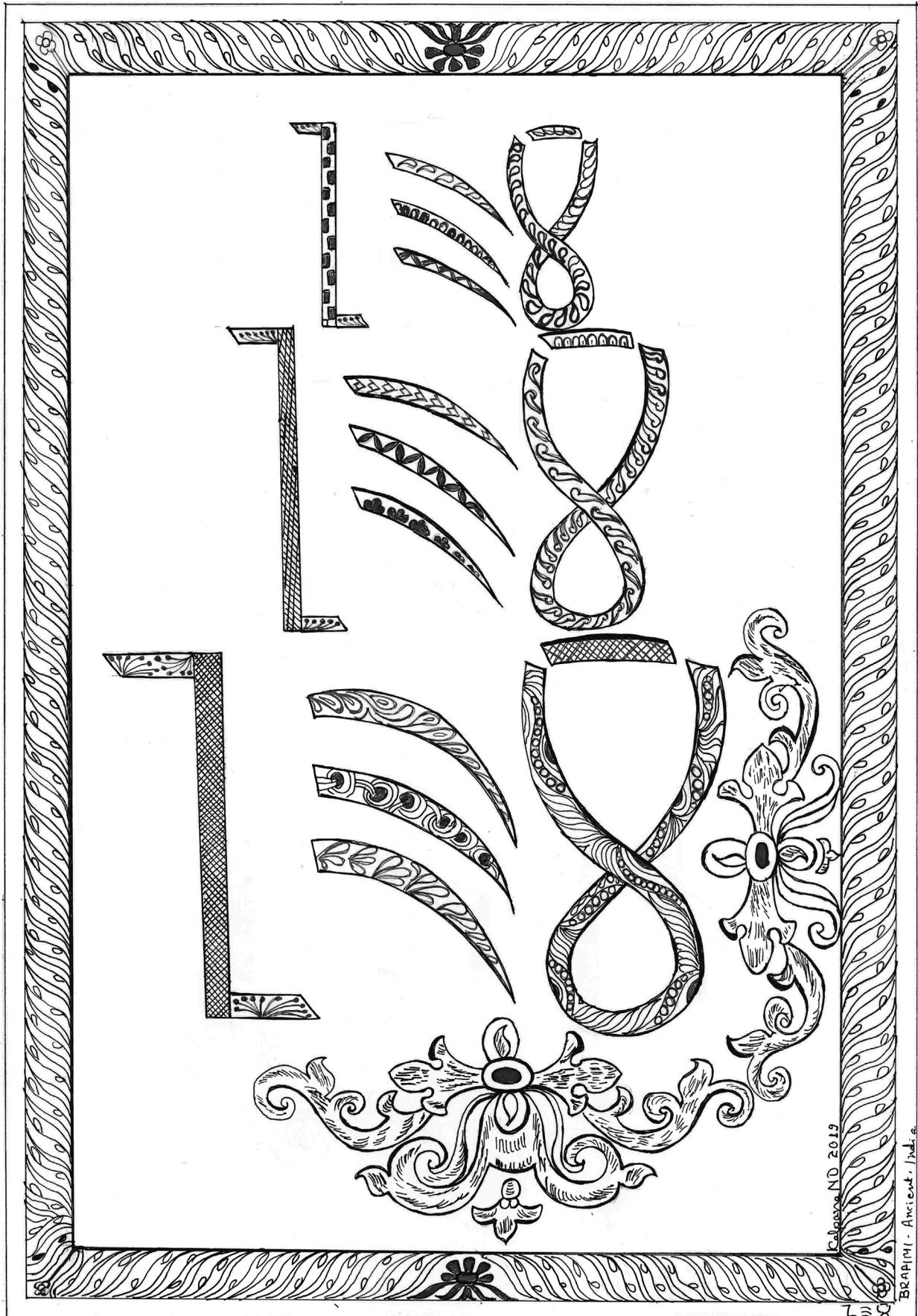
LANGUAGE

Brahmi developed in ancient South Asia in the mid-first millennium BCE. It appeared as a fully developed script only around the third century BCE. Later, over the course of a millennium, it evolved and developed into several regional scripts. Brahmi was soon adapted by Brahmin scholars to suit the phonetics of local languages, such as Sanskrit and Prakrit, of the time. Being thus integrated and assimilated, Brahmi quickly became the official script of religious texts and cults. This was the reason it spread all over India. Another script, Kharosthi, an Indo-Iranian contemporary of Brahmi, was spreading from Central Asia to India, but eventually Brahmi prevailed. In the last century BCE, Brahmi had come to be divided into three groups: northern, south-eastern, and southern; and by the fifth century CE, the first separate branches emerged. In South India, the 'Kadamb' and 'Pallava' scripts were in use. The earliest and most famous inscriptions in Brahmi are the rock-cut edicts of Emperor Ashoka (268 BCE- 232 BCE) of the Maurya empire, in north-central India.

The Brahmi script is the ancestor of practically all modern Indian writing systems. In all there are 120 variants of them now in Asian countries of which about 40 variants are in India. All modern Indian scripts, about 40 of them, and several hundred scripts found in Southeast and East Asia are derived from Brahmi.

Thus, the Brahmi script is the Indian equivalent of the Greek script that gave rise to a host of different systems.

Brahmi is portrayed moderately here in its simple form. At the base of Aum, a small motif resembling a lotus leaf is drawn, reminiscent of the architecture of Emperor Ashoka whose famous edicts were inscribed in Brahmi on pillars, boulders, and cave walls.



Calculus ND 2019

BRAPIMI - Ancient, India



BAUDDHA

SYMBOL - TRIANKA

Trianka, triyanka or tiratna is one of the oldest symbols of AUM in Buddhism. It represents all three aspects of Buddhism: the Buddha, Dharma – teachings of Buddhism, and Sangha – monastic community. The three are considered forms of mind, speech, and forms of the body. This venerable symbol is to be found in ancient Buddhist caves, in the toranas or great gates of the ancient Buddhist complex of Sanchi, and in historical coins of Buddhist kingdoms.

Over the course of time, new symbols arrived in different forms.

The sitting posture in meditation of the Buddhist monk is triyanka. This form is shown here surrounded by light feathers. Thus, AUM indicates a burden-free life. Other symbols of Buddhism such as swastika, sky, clouds, and lotus are filled between the lines of triyanka and borders on all four sides.



TRIANIKA - OLDEST BUDDHIST SYMBOL

SACHET
BY
JANIS



GRANTHA

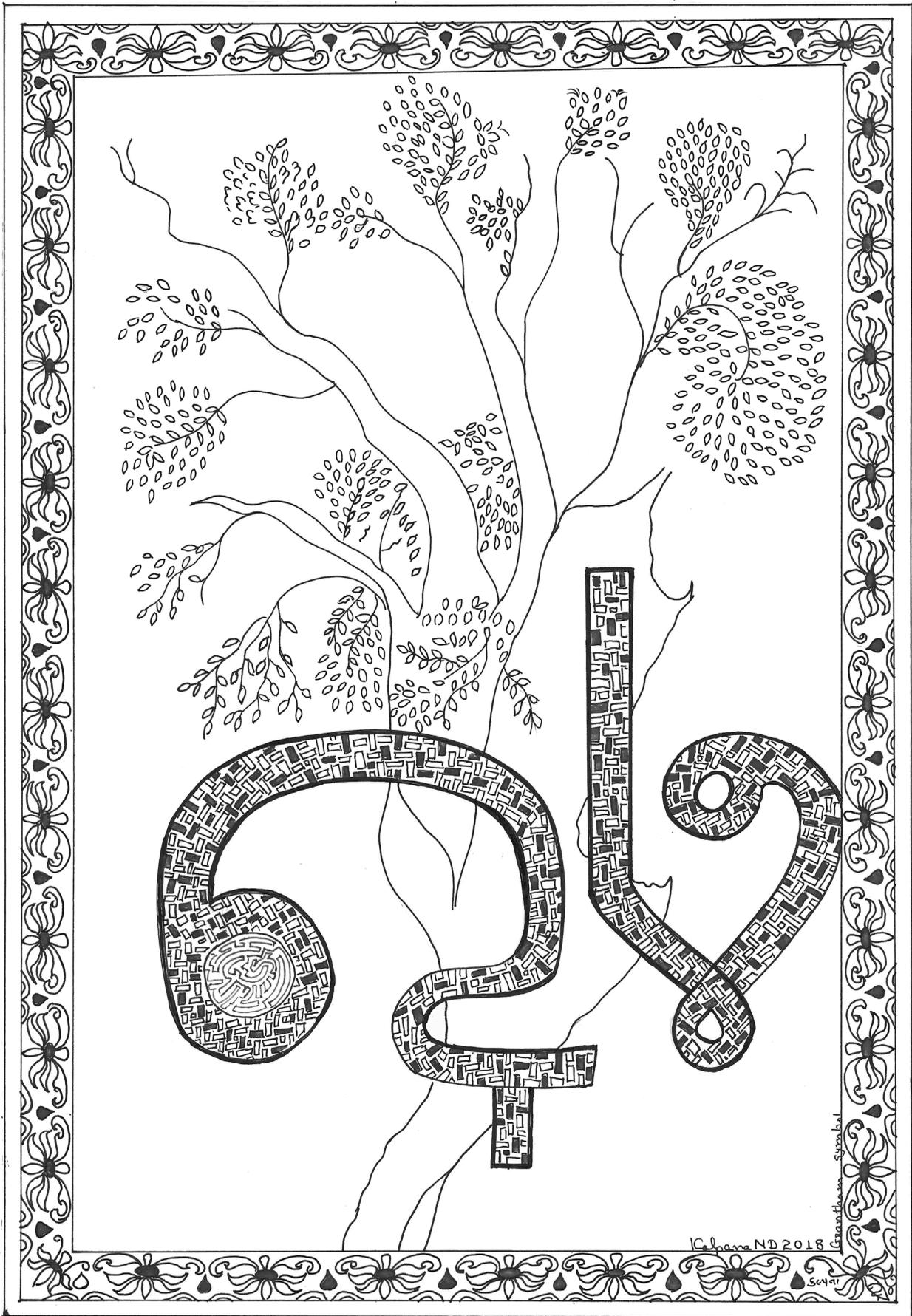
LANGUAGE

The Grantha script emerged in the fourth century CE. It was known as Pallava Grantha and was in use till the seventh century in India. It originated from the Pallava script. This early Grantha script was used to write Sanskrit texts, and inscriptions on copper plates and stones in Hindu temples and Buddhist monasteries. Middle Grantha evolved from it in the seventh century and transitional grantha in the eighth century. It was used till the 14th century, followed by modern Grantha. Classical texts in Sanskrit and Dravidian languages are written in this script. It is also used in the chanting of hymns and taught in traditional Vedic schools.

Southeast Asian scripts such as Thai, Javanese, Tigalari, and Sinhala are derived from Grantha.

In Tamil, it is called Granthaeluttu and in Malayalam it is called Granthalipi.

AUM is presented here with plants and motifs from temple walls.



Cahaya ND 2018

Gerardus Symbel

Scyri

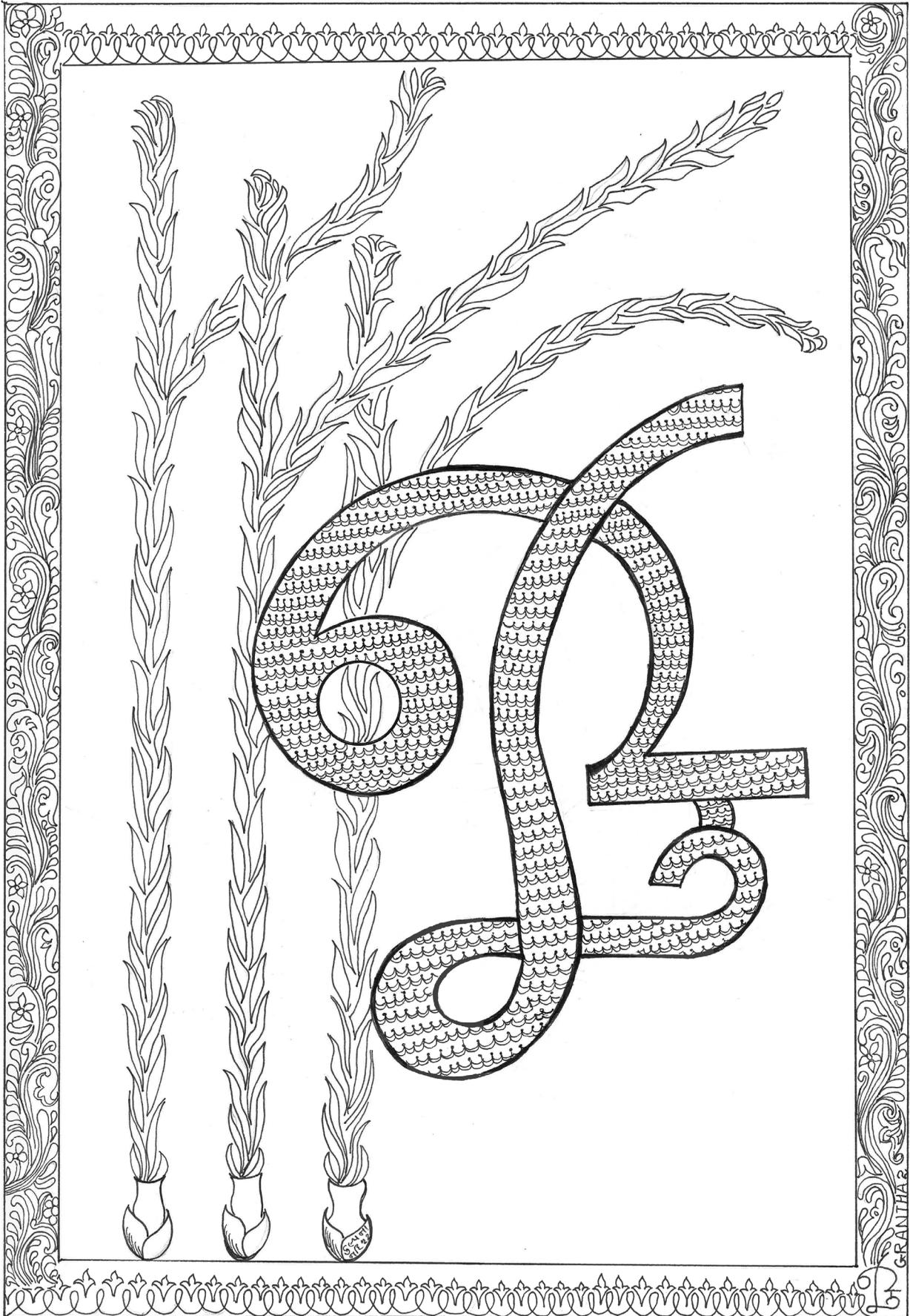


GRANTHA

LANGUAGE

Derived from the Pallava script in the third century CE, it went through many transformations before reaching the modern form of the Grantha script. It is used in Tamil and Malayalam.

AUM is depicted here with plants and motifs from South Indian temple architecture.





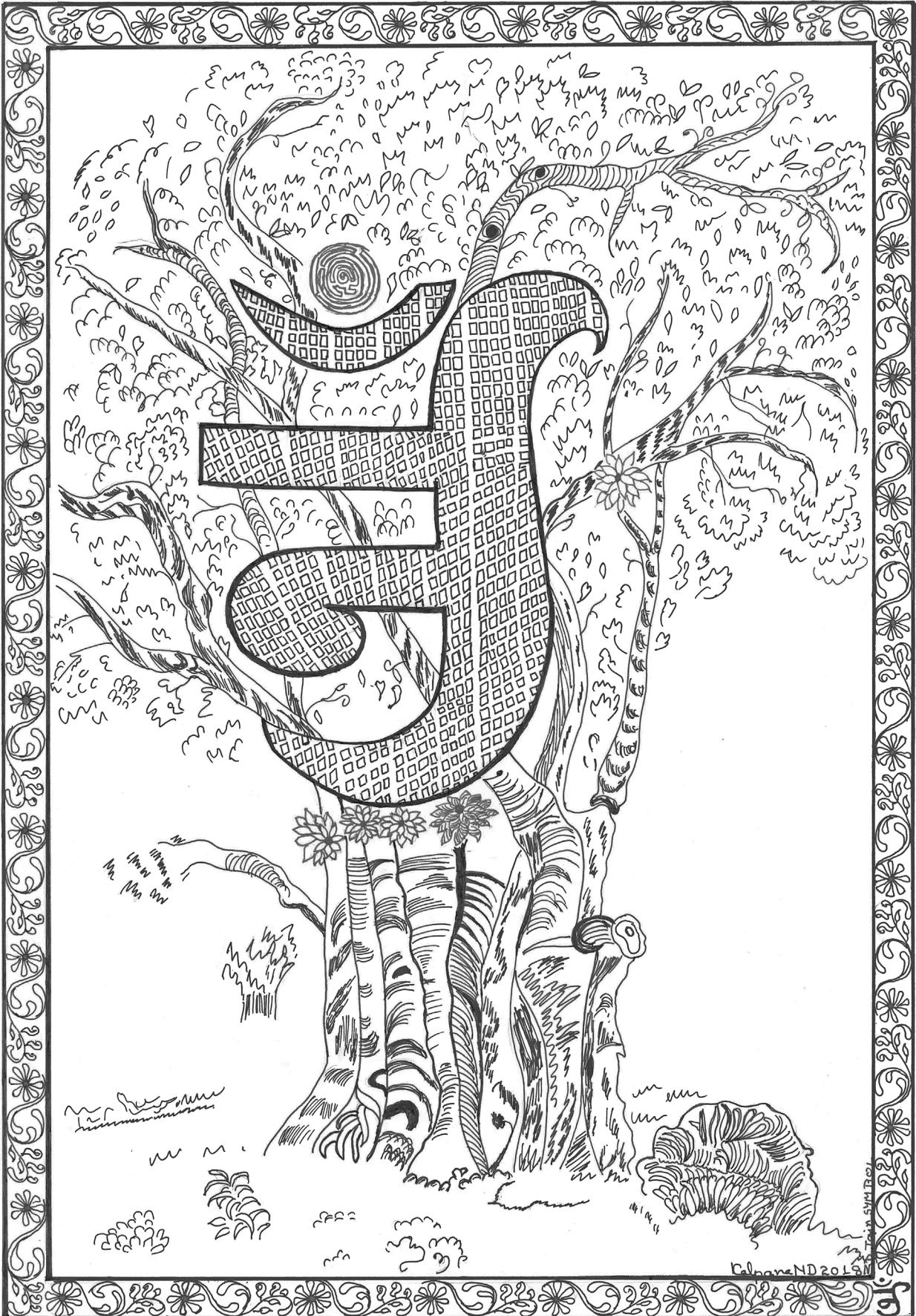
JAIN

SYMBOL

Aum has been turned into a symbol in the Jaina religion. It is a conjunction of the first letters of the Panch Parmeshtis (five supreme beings) in Jaina philosophy. Epics and scriptures in the Jain religion are written in the Ardhamagadhi and Prakrit languages, which evolved from Brahmi. For realisation in life, a person initiates spiritual exercises by which he evokes a divinity, identifying and absorbing it into himself. The initial stage is called 'Muni' (sadhu) i.e. one who has renounced worldly life and lives under the guardianship of a guru. While ascending advanced spiritual levels, he achieves various stages namely Upadhyaya, Acharya, Arihanta, and Ashariri. Thus, in Jainism, AUM is a single syllable that holds the initials of the Panch Parameshtis : Ashariri, Arihanta, Acharya, Upadhyaya, and Muni. In short, 'a' + 'a' + 'ā' + 'u' + 'm' = aum. It is written in the Ardhamagadhi language here.

Muni (sadhu) rises from the ground, which is indicated in a curved, upward direction. The next stage is a parallel line with a rounded curve, bent towards the land. It indicates weak moments on the journey. It is 'Upadhyaya'. The next stage takes us to a parallel line which indicates the stage of 'Acharya' representing stability and firmness of character. The penultimate stage is one of detachment, depicted here by an upward waxing crescent, called 'Arihanta', indicating movement towards the sky. On top of it is a circle indicating the practitioner attained 'keval gyan' (omniscience) and is a liberated soul. He does not have a physical body. This, Ashariri stage is total detachment from the world.

The Panch Parmeshtis are the main essence of the Jain religion as principles of minute non-violence and renunciation. From the beginning of spiritual development till realisation, the five stages are defined in an ascending series. The first letters of these stages forms AUM in symbol in Jain religion.



Colore ND 2013



SIDDHAM

LANGUAGE

Siddham, also known as Siddhamatrika, is a Brahmic script, derived from the Gupta script in the late sixth century CE. The name Siddham comes from Sanskrit and means 'accomplished or perfected'. The Siddham script is mainly used by Shingon Buddhists in Japan to write mantras and sutras in Sanskrit. In Japan it is known as Bonji. Many Buddhist texts, particularly tantra texts, were taken to China along the silk route. However, since it was considered essential to ensure perfect pronunciation while chanting mantras, which was not possible with the use of Chinese, the Siddham script was retained. In China it is known as Xitan wenzi. It had been used in Korea as well as in Central Asia by the early seventh century CE. The script continued to evolve, and minor variations took place over time and in different regions. Siddham's northeastern derivative in India was called Gaudi; it evolved further and the Assamese, Bengali, Nagari, Odia, Tirhuta, and Nepalese scripts came into existence.