

## **CALLIGRAPHY ‘AN ART FORM’**

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### **✚ EVOLUTION** **✚ REASONS OF EXPANDING**

Calligraphy is a Greek word meaning ‘beautiful writing’ or “good penmanship” or ‘art of calligraphy’. In prehistoric times man was not aware of any type of language and therefore he used to communicate with the help of different sounds or symbols produced by human beings. People used to convey their messages through the series of their gruff sounds but after sometime they found that they were unable to convey their message properly and clearly. Then they tried to remove this defect and started making scratches on rocks for the depiction of their ideas or desires to their fellowmen. This is how they started communicating through pictograms. Slowly and gradually according to their needs they started producing ideograms. Thus they started communicating by using both pictograms as well as ideograms. But after passage of more time they found that such depiction of their feelings was not sufficient for conveying messages clearly. This led to pictographic writing which was invented by ancient Sumerians and ancient Egyptians. They based their writing system on pictorial representations. This pictographic writing became highly developed and reached great heights under the direction of the Egyptians. By 3500 B.C. Egyptians raised this to a comprehensive art displayed in their stylish hieroglyphic form of writing. Some appropriate symbols were incised inside tombs or painted with brushes on papyrus paper. A few thousand years later i.e. around 1000 BC the Phoenicians went a step further and invented abstract alphabets and developed a distinct writing system based on phonograms . Luckily the Phoenicians were sea navigators and they readily passed along their new talents to every seaport through which they passed. It was appreciated by the Greeks who later on developed their own system of writing. By 850 BC the Romans adopted it in their Latin language. Alphabets continued to be passed from one culture or language to another.

In this way sounding alphabets came into being and with the combination of these alphabets words were produced and later with the combination of words sentences were formed and in this manner complete script came into existence. Thus the problem of communication was solved evolutionally, and led to the progress of languages, and their scripts. After sometime the art of beautiful penmanship called calligraphy came into existence.

In the West by the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. the Romans started carving letters into stone, painting them on walls, and also developed a cursive form of writing for daily use. Written language continued to flourish until the fall

of Rome. During the subsequent Dark Ages, monks laboriously copied texts to reproduce and preserve, religious scriptures, and other manuscripts. Their works were carefully checked and monitored by elders and they were provided with favorable and free environment to minimize mistakes in their works. Calligraphy was used to give a decent look to the manuscripts. Works of this period are known for their ornately illuminated calligraphy. The prominent reason for the development and expansion of calligraphy was the copying of the sacred texts.

Calligraphy is a popular art whose boundaries are not confined to Europe and the United States only but it enjoys a long and popular history in Asia also, especially in the Middle East countries. Arabic and Asian calligraphy specimens have been appreciated and acknowledged as works of superior art and beauty. Since around 1500 BC, the Chinese had a complicated writing system using more than 1500 characters. Today the Chinese consider 'the art of calligraphy' to be one of their most specialized art forms. Master calligraphers of China excelled in spontaneously stroking a brush over the paper, after extensive meditation and designing. Even in present days 'the art of calligraphy' is regarded as a popular traditional art in china they used to organize several shows and exhibitions to popularize this art form and due to that 'the art of calligraphy' has become more famous and respected than painting in China.

In Arab countries the art of calligraphy was welcomed with high zeal. Arabs were late comers in their writing system but after inventing their script they worked on it laboriously and made it more beautiful and impressive. Presently the Arabs are known for their glorious history of calligraphy in the world. Their cursive hand is written from right to left and consists eighteen distinct shapes, which in various combinations produce twenty eight letters.

In Arabic calligraphy, there are six major scripts Farsi, Naskh, Kufi, Deewani, Riqaa and Thuluth, representing various artistic styles. Arabic calligraphy is highly respected as an art form, because of the holy book of Muslims "Quran" is written in Arabic script. The Holy "Quran" has played a vital role in spreading the art of Arabic calligraphy all over the world.

In Persia (Iran) also beautiful form of writing was very much praised. In earlier days Persians used to write beautifully in their Persian script but after the spread of Islam and conquest of Persia by Arabs in 7<sup>th</sup> century, the Persians adopted Arabic letters or words which influenced their writing system and they started using fine Arabic calligraphy in their manuscripts. They started using it in their own style and developed contemporary Persian alphabets. Arabic alphabets have 28 characters and Persians added another four letters in it.

The Persian calligraphy is categorized into the ordinary Persian script; Nastaliq script and the Shikista Nastaliq script. 'Nastaliq' is the most popular contemporary style among classical Persian calligraphy scripts and Persian calligraphers call it "Bride of the calligraphic scripts"

The origin of calligraphy in India is traced around the same time as in other East Asian countries viz– 265 BC. Copper and stone was the lasting and favoured medium of inscriptions for calligraphy. It was slowly replaced by birch bark and palm leaves cut into rectangular pieces of uniform size and put together to form a book. These pieces were tied together with a string drawn through a hole in the leaves. The best work of Sanskrit calligraphy was preserved on palm leaves.

‘The art of calligraphy’ became more popular after the era of polytheism and was used traditionally in the ancient world. With the advent of MONOTHEISM people started believing in one ‘God’ and expanding their own religion through publicity of religious texts. They used to produce and present religious texts in a beautiful form by using ‘the art of calligraphy’. This was done by scribes to attract the attention of the readers. Thus compilation and dispersal of beautiful religious books helped a lot in the propagation and extension of their religions. This process of copying the ancient religious texts into an ornamental volumes played a vital role in spreading the ‘art of calligraphy’ and religions as well. It also helped in preserving ancient heritage in the form of religious texts, WORDS of God and His messengers and other religious divines. In ancient India mostly the calligraphy was done in Sanskrit language because at that time Hinduism was the only existing religion and Sanskrit was its sacred language having the religious texts. Religious texts of Hinduism like Vedas, Mahabharata, Ramayana, Geeta were all written and copied in Sanskrit language.

In Medieval India, Mughals were more attached to Persia because of their ancestral links; they took a keen interest in Persian paintings and language. They were very much impressed with their painting and writing, and they popularized the Persian style of painting and writing in India. It is an established fact that Persian influence gave rise to a unique and influential blend in Indian calligraphy.

The holy books of different religions, historical texts, literary works, manuscripts and epics all have played an important role in the development and popularity of art of calligraphy. On the other hand calligraphy has contributed much in popularity and publicity of these books among masses. Religious texts in particular have led the development and expansion of art of calligraphy. It became a common practice in the world to present religious sacred textbooks in a well knit form with ornamental depiction of its characters. This practice of putting the religious texts into ornamental forms became popular in India also and flourished during ancient medieval and even in modern times.

Mughal kings Akbar and Shah Jahan had keen interest in architecture more than painting and during their reigns many marvelous buildings were built like the Buland Darwaza built by Akbar and the Taj Mahal built by Shah Jahan .These buildings contain beautiful Arabic inscriptions which surpass all calligraphic masterpieces of the world.

Today the art of calligraphy is extensively used in advertising, trade, poster- making, graphic designs, wedding cards, invitation card, logos, prop-marks, on the door frames of houses, showrooms, and art galleries, beautiful calligraphic fonts are printed on pamphlets, garments like on T-shirts, on frills of skirts, on jeans and on kid's garments. It is also executed for writing slogans on utensils, mugs, glasses, cups, plates, dishes and also on disposable glass pieces. It is also used in writing of certificates, and children's books. The art of calligraphy has become important in writing poetry also. We can also convey our messages impressively and easily to others by using this decorative art.

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