

## THE ART OF HANDWRITING

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Calligraphy means beautiful writing. The word calligraphy is combination of two words from the Greek language. “Kallos” means beauty and “Graphein” meaning to write. Thus the simple definition of calligraphy such as the “art of fine handwriting”. “Handwriting as an art” reflects the aesthetic concern and the beautiful aspect of hand written expression. Written expression would necessarily need a writing system. One of the writing systems, which we commonly use, is the concept of “language”. The writing system at the linguistic level is concerned about “content” relation, a system (such as Hindi or Tibetan language) meant to communicate messages wherein signs operate within a social context with phonetic and graphic values attached to each sign. Such linguistic approach is characterised especially by verbal systems (such as speech, poetry, literature etc.) along with phonetic values. These are further linked and associated with written systems (scripts). In such a model, calligraphy would be concerned regarding the visual appearance of the visual system through the, aesthetic consideration for its ingredients-written letters (aksharas), words, sentences and the text. These ingredients are applied through a proper writing tool and technology adapted by the human hand would lead to the ‘beautiful’ handwriting. Such calligraphy will help in expressing the “content” of linguistic expressions more effectively. Further the disciplines like typography (printed text produced through pre-fabricated letters) and compugraphy (processed text produced through the manipulation of digital information regarding the letters) add functional dimension to this typical linguistic model.

Writing activity, which includes human hand, is at its peak in any calligraphic expressions. However any hand writing just because its hand written cannot be called calligraphy. Even just good looking hand writing is not enough to be qualified. A good hand writing with aesthetic considerations which reflects a serious concern regarding the “content”, which takes an utmost care regarding the Act of writing, which is perfected with dedicated practice and which is governed by a writing philosophy is characterized as calligraphy.

### THE ACT OF WRITING

Any act of writing has to have a purpose. To achieve certain communicative goals, the act of writing starts with the right type of frame of mind and balance. “It’s not just with the hand and the arm, but with the heart and mind, draw it. “The right type of tool - flat or pointed tipped, flexible or non-flexible in character has to be chosen along with the writing medium/vehicle such as ink, color etc. writing surface- a coated smooth or handmade rough textured paper and or an absorbent cloth or any other material has to be chosen carefully as per the desired results. Placed in front with the writing material on his side, the calligrapher has to adopt the right kind of posture and with full concentration should begin the act of writing. The proportion of the constituent elements of the letters such as vertical, horizontal, angular and curved strokes - their heights, width and joineries, creating proportionate structures are to be carefully studied. The position of letters, words and sentences as related to the open space, their linear or non-linear orientation creating the right relation to the drawn and non-drawn areas are to be planned. The scales of writing in terms of sizes of various elements within a given text need to be considered. The control over the tonality of the text by attributing the right type of tonal color

to the letters and words through the right quantity of the release of the writing vehicle (ink) is to be achieved. A further definite style of writing is to be achieved by identifying and stressing a common visual link, visual denominator in all letters. The existing calligraphic styles of the past as related to the particular language/ script can be studied and followed or alternatively new styles can be developed through research and developmental activities. Various types of writing manuals, and calligraphy treaties need to be reintroduced, planned/ designed so that the 'the act of writing can be undertaken as a regular academic activity at an appropriate level. Children in various age groups will be benefited by such activity in terms of basic disciplines as well as creative explorations related to any given script.

### THE PRACTICE OF CALLIGRAPHY

In addition to the creation of academic ground and laying the foundation for "sensitivity" towards letter form in the young minds, a rigorous practice of calligraphy needs to be introduced at vocational and professional levels so that professional practitioners as well as master calligraphers will join the community of 'scribes' (calligraphers) will help create a better designed and well written communication, Advanced level workshops, crash courses, competitions and programmes to apply calligraphy in professional practices will make such activity economically viable. Scroll of honour, certificates, citations, important documents, declarations, records, stationery items, symbols, logos, captions and many other application areas can be explored in terms of new writing tools, techniques, materials and calligraphic styles. The master calligraphers, through their works could get the insight into the intricacies, subtleties as well as inherent structural rules of the calligraphic styles of the past. Through such research work these masters would be able to develop and design new calligraphic styles for contemporary use, based on earlier models. 10 with technological help, such efforts can be put to further use through computer technology. Many calligraphic styles can be made available, for creating aesthetically pleasant yet functionally expressive "calligraphic text". The specialized calli-fonts as well as dynamic letter forms can be effectively planned only through the vision of master calligraphers.

In addition to creating such a unique human being in the context of modern technology, such calligraphic practice would enhance the contemporary relevance of the subject calligraphy, which otherwise is wrongly associated with ancient writing and outdated technology. Further the interdisciplinary interaction with writing masters and subject experts of other disciplines such as orthography, epigraphy, paleography, cartography, applied linguistics, semeiotics, ergonomics etc. would initiate new experiments, new research directions and similar collaborative projects, so essential in promoting and consolidating multilingual/ multi-scriptural identity. Such forms would lead to international exchange at research and developmental levels for global languages/ scripts. Thus the practice of calligraphy need not be limited to an individual's effort and/ or contributions but can be extended to collective activity and meaningful exchange exploring various modes of writing and concepts of languages.

### THE PHILOSOPHY OF WRITING

A given writing system, in a given linguistic context, can be used for mundane (Laukik) purposes. Through Its calligraphy, it can also be effectively used for aesthetic! expressive (alaukik) purposes (calligraphic poems, logos, symbols, etc.). Further calligraphy can be practiced at ritualistic level (multi-syllabic mantras and sacred monographs) for ideation and manifestation of seed syllabus used for meditation purposes (Siddham Beejaksharas calligraphed to manifest the Buddha). On the other hand



considering the formalist's approach to the broader definition of 'language' as preference to the form and not the content, written signs acquire different dimensions. Here the signs are expected to represent themselves and the syntactic relationships they have with each other. They are not expected to represent anything else. Such a concrete relationship of sign on the form level can exist without expectation of content. If such an approach is extended to calligraphy, then the written strokes and their syntactic with other strokes can be viewed in different light altogether. These stroke structures need not be related to their phonetic content but could be appreciated only as 'formal' (visual) language. Such purist formal writing activity by a calligrapher can elevate him/ her to a different type of aesthetic experience and further towards visual enlightenment.

In such a situation the blank space also becomes an integral element of formal expression and can be viewed as parallel to a silence as in verbal expression. A degenerative process to reduce noise from written communication could be experienced as in verbal communication. The journey from long speech to few sentences, from few sentences to the utterance of few words, from few words to a single sound and from a single sound to total silence, indicates a degenerative process to reduce the noise and ultimately a self-imposed attainment in silence. Calligraphy, through the formalist approach would also get reduced from letters to stroke, and further to a single stroke, a dot and then to nothingness. In such an ultimate situation through the non-written blank space, a calligrapher can experience the act of writing - as a divine experience. Thus calligraphy is not just beautiful writing but can become a way of life to a 'Sadhaka' through the enrichment of the experiences of writing as well as non-writing.

*We are not masters of our creative work*

*It is our assignment*

*It's about an all-pervading phenomenon*

The trees write volumes of non-readable yet writable text on the empty expanse of space around them. Only if we could read the furious text written by them on a stormy night. Mountains are frozen marks on the earth. It takes thousands of years to write such epics.

The winding paths are written swashes flowing in all directions intertwined in the search of the unknown. A streak of water follows the natural surface dedicatedly in order to achieve its free verse on the face of Mother Earth. Ploughing is an act of linear writing. Only then seed thoughts emerge. Travel leaves footprints as marks.

The act of writing is performed while walking. After a while, the written text disappears, but that doesn't matter. The act of writing for the sake of writing is significant in the same way, as writing with letters which is expected to result into something concrete. Such written marks all over the body of the Mother Earth and the vast expanse of Shunya which hold them are the real cultural identities. Such individual marks as an entity or the collectiveness of these marks as writable text is still unreadable by the present human eye and the mind. Such texts, floating all around us would contain environmental treatises, which the new green breed may eventually be able to see, read, experience, making them 'environmental literate'.