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The beauty of Bangla calligraphy



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What comes to mind when you hear the word calligraphy? Probably, the fluid artistic representation of the Arabic alphabets, the oriental delight that is the Chinese script, or English letters in Gothic font with extravagant curves. But, have you ever thought about Bangla calligraphy — the beauty of Bengali expressed through lyrical strokes and the endless possibilities it holds as an aesthetic form?

The word calligraphy is a

combination of two Greek words — kallos, meaning 'beauty' and graphein, meaning 'to write.' So, calligraphy literally means 'beautiful writing.' It is a form of ornamental handwriting prevalent in various cultures throughout the world and its origin dates back to ancient times.

It will not be an exaggeration to say that

Bangla calligraphy has not received much attention until recent times. Considering the fact that we have so many letters, there is a huge potential for Bangla calligraphy to be artistically expressive. Poster and wall writing has been a part of our cultural identity for quite some time now, but it did little for the development of the art.

Many people are interested in calligraphy but only a handful of them practice the art. Even fewer are serious about it. Some people think that calligraphy is just 'good handwriting.' It is so much more than that.

The essence of Bangla calligraphy

While it is true that Bangla calligraphy has largely been neglected, there are very few who are passionately practicing it and fortunately for us, the art form still survives. In fact, it is thriving in the hands of Arham-ul-Huq Chowdhury, an artist working to express the true beauty of Bangla calligraphy in its glory and the devotion is visible in his work.

Having started his artistic endeavour in 1995 with hand-painted furniture and pottery, Chowdhury soon realised that he should do something with calligraphy. In 2000, he had his first-ever solo exhibition of Bangla calligraphy at Goethe Institute, which was also the first one of its kind in Bangladesh. Since then, he's had more than 22 exhibitions in Bangladesh.

Chowdhury wanted to go beyond the norm. "Anyone can write simple scripts like 'Eid Mubarak' or 'Tomake Valobashi'" he said. There are so many different elements of Bangla language that can be expressed in calligraphy and he focused on that. "I like to call them calligraphy painting and believe they are highly communicative," he said, pointing to his artworks.

Shrestha Halder is an amateur calligrapher who has been trying Bangla calligraphy for a couple of years now. His passion was ignited by a love for the fountain pen.

