INTRODUCTION

In common parlance, calligraphy means the art of beautiful writing. Arabic calligraphy has definite styles of writing the language from right to left and also has principles and norms for each style. Each letter of particular style has various shapes within the same kind of script. Besides the alone form of letter, it may connected on both sides while some letters can be connected only on one side. The shape of every letter is different, and a number of styles are a good subject of overlapping. Particular scripts have many beautiful vowel-marks while some do not have any. Though each script has its own standard and norms, all scripts use the same scale of measurement of dot and half-dot which was compiled by the pioneers.

Arabic calligraphy was and still is a basic art work, especially through its different shapes and techniques along with its different functional usages. Arabic calligraphy displays and tells a lot about people and their traditions through its detailing and meticulous precision. According to the Islamic religious tenet, the use of human images and idols was banned because of the belief that humans should not match the power of God (Allah) in creation. Moreover, it was to refrain the new believers of Islam from worshipping the idols they used to before Islam. Instead, to bring out his talent the Muslim artist searched for a new outlet for his creativity which he found in his favourite Arabic calligraphy. It became sacrosanct because of its links with the writing of the Holy Qur’an in the early time of Islam. The pioneering use of paper in the Islamic world led to a greater development of different kinds of Arabic calligraphy till it became more and more popular.

The roots of the subject of this study are found in Islamic art and particularly in the art of Arabic calligraphy, which was officially introduced in India towards the end

* See table 1 on pp. ii, iii.
of the 12th century A.D. It can be apparently found on carved stones in the surviving monuments, and later manuscripts.

Describing the capital of India, Ibn Battuta, the Arabian Muslim traveler who visited India in the 14th century A.D. has said: "...The day after we reached Hazrat Dehli (Delhi), the base of Hindustan, the big city with a great importance, which is the gatherer of beauty and immunity. A wall around it has no counterpart anywhere in the world. It is the greatest of Indian cities, rather of all Islamic cities of the East".¹

Even before the Islamic rule in India, there was an exceptionally positive relationship between India and the Arabs, which increased with the continued social and cultural communications through the centuries. It is to be known that Arabic calligraphy introduced in India was an Indian art work. As Karl Khandalavala, when talking about Qutub Minar, says, "The builders of the Qutub Minar and the carvers of its decorative features were Indians, while the material used was red stone and marble from Indian quarries". And this was even before the Indians became masters in writing Arabic calligraphy, and Muhammad Husain Kashmiri, held the highest title of Zarrin qalam (golden pen).

This calligraphy became popular in India when it was used in the court's official language as Persian and then Urdu adopted the Arabic alphabet. Shortly after its advent, Islam, the new religion, spread in all directions to all parts of the Arab land. The basic elements of this new religion was to be practiced in the Arabic language, because of its strict link with the Holy Qur'an and daily prayers. So, when the non-Arabs entered Islam, they used the Arabic alphabet in their own languages such as Persian, Turkish and Urdu.

² K. Khandalavala; The Heritage of Islamic Art in India, p. 5.
After the invasion by Mongols, the Arab Abbasid central Muslim state declined. This led to other Muslim nations alternatively assuming the patronage of Arabic calligraphy. The basic formation of the alphabet was Arabic, whatever the language be Persian, Turkish or Urdu. All these languages further made additions to the formation of Arabic calligraphy. The Persians contributed by creating new forms of Arabic letters like *Ta‘liq* which developed to *Nasta‘liq* and *Shikasta* scripts. The *Nasta‘liq* was brought by the Mughals to India and reached its peak during their time. The Turkish also created the *Diwani, Jali-Diwani, Ruq‘ah* scripts besides the *Tughra* style. Indian Urdu simply adopted and developed the *Nasta‘liq* script with a creation of Bihari script, which was deserted after a remarkable stage, was reached.

From the notable names of Indian calligraphers as mentioned in Indian sources, Indian calligraphers, who practiced with interest, the Arabic calligraphy more effectively in the Mughal court, were both Hindus and Muslims. As the pen, the precious instrument of the calligrapher was very much in demand, which revolutionalyzed certain calligraphy kinds by exercise and measurement – and was highly valued at the time; the distinguished calligraphers were generously rewarded, highly regarded, honoured and given superb titles throughout the Islamic history.

Since the very beginning of Islam in the Arab land and then in Persia, Turkey and India, the masters, the minister; the prince, the caliph, the sultan, the king, the emperor have all practiced Arabic calligraphy and left behind notable works of calligraphy, not only on common ink and paper, but also, as apparently in India, on carved stone.

Perhaps, I am not overstating by saying that it is a challenge to go ahead with no

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3. See, A. Siddiqui, Islamic Calligraphy, p. 83. (For instance).
4. See Figures Nos. 21-26 of Chapter one in this study.
fear or hesitation in this vast field of study, which depends strongly on my special
relations with the elements of the current study. In addition, I have taught art history,
drawing, painting and Arabic calligraphy in a number of art institutes and universities
in Iraq and a number of other countries.

Over and above, I have some publications pertaining to the subject, which all
met with my earnest longing to explore the use of this art in the Indian field. So I
picked up my camera, note-book, related material for measurement and started
traveling. I was deeply fascinated during my field work for a period of ten months. I
have seen a number of huge monuments and museums in the main places I could cover,
examining buildings, as well as in the field, slab remains, and miniature paintings in
museums and libraries.

Though many publications have dealt with the text of monumental calligraphy,
but none of them have dealt directly with the calligraphy of miniature paintings.

In addition to new reading and different way of dealing with monumental
Arabic calligraphy in India, this attempted study is the first step in direct dealing with
this calligraphy, sharing the composition of a painting which I hope will pave the way
for further attempts, and to throw more light on this vast subject.

In order to depict a clear picture of the art of Arabic calligraphy, and to point
out the religious, political and social assignments, the overall object of this illustrated
art historical study is to explore the aesthetical sense of different techniques which have
been used in different parts of India through particular periods of Indian history. The
importance of Arabic calligraphy, indeed was and still is for most of the part, latent in
its very decisive role in achieving a high level of functional need of both political and
religious leadership. And also of the public social life as well, which embodies an
aesthetic indication.
In relation to the use of Arabic calligraphy in Indian architecture and painting, I went through a number of literary sources written in Arabic and English throughout libraries in various Arab countries. I also had the opportunity to go through a number of various publications dealing directly and indirectly with the subject in a number of affluent Indian libraries, where naturally, I could not cover all published materials. But I found in the field work of the Indian Islamic architecture and painting that it has more calligraphic art work which neither I nor the literary materials can ever cover, all those substantial typical examples of Indian heritage, at least for a while.

It is worth mentioning that I surveyed a great number of examples of architecture and paintings. With great difficulty I selected the most suitable examples regarding the site, kind of calligraphy, period, material and technique used. I have also used secondary sources regarding few notable miniature paintings which were moved abroad from India. I found no difficulties in translating most of the religious and historical records appearing in architecture because they were written in Arabic (my native language). With the help of some literary sources, I went through a number of Persian texts. But with paintings it was different as there were few examples in Arabic while the majority were in Persian. Though I can read Persian easily, because of its relation to Arabic alphabet, but in order to be sufficiently proficient in it, I undertook a one-year certificate course in Persian language in the Department of Persian and Urdu at Panjab University, Chandigarh. With great help that I got from this department, it was possible to translate the Persian texts within the composition of the paintings.

In this study, I have dealt with the subject through certain methodological procedures in order to cognizance the essential nature of Arabic calligraphy. Firstly, I have briefly presented the origin and general history of Arabic calligraphy, its rise and establishment, its kinds, its spread particularly into India, its stand and innovators.
Also, I have touched on its role and importance. Therefore, the study presents a condense review of some of the relevant publications of a notable number of scholars whose materials was provided to me were a great help earlier and while I was busy with my work. The main body of this research work is found in the following analytical study which has dealt extensively with the selected examples of both Indian architecture and paintings within the prescribed limits. Though neither all monuments nor all miniature paintings within a manuscripts or individually contain calligraphy work, there is an enormous number of monuments with their different kinds of script and technique in the Indian field, which has made me drifted towards presenting more specimens of calligraphy work in architecture than in painting.

This analytical study comprises a catalogue and review of the selected examples, which covers depicting, translating and counting the calligraphy presence, both in architecture and painting with a reference to the necessary observations of the literary material. In addition to a special exhibition of selected examples of Indian calligraphy used in both Indian architecture and miniature painting, the study displays the conclusion and notes along with a list of the monuments, paintings, calligraphers, museums, and an Indian map marking the different sites that I have visited of this beautiful country. Finally, to calculate the (A.D.) date from the Hijri (A.H.) and vice-versa, I depended on the following equations given below: The abbreviation used for (A.H.) date is (H) and for (A.D.) date is (D). Thus we have,

(i) In case of knowing the Hijri (A.H.) date: \( H \times \frac{32}{33} + 621 = D. \)

For example:

\[ 700 \times \frac{32}{33} + 621 = 1299, \, 78 = 1300 \, \text{A.D.} \]

5. See H. Al-Basha; Research Room for Architecture and Islamic Arts (Arabic), pp. 195 – 196.
(ii) In case of knowing the (A.D.) date:

\[(D - 621) \times \frac{33}{32} = H.\]

For example:

\[(1300 - 621) \times \frac{33}{32} = 700, 2 = 700 \text{A.H.}.\]