

## HANDWRITING AS MEANS OF IDENTIFICATION

**C. K. Johari**

Handwriting & Fingerprint Expert

Apart from the Finger Print Expert, the second most popular Expert In the field of litigation is the **Handwriting Expert**, also called **The Examiner of Questioned Documents**.

The scope of his activities is very vast, but the litigant public generally think that he only identifies two handwritten scripts. This belief of the people is not incorrect because most of the Experts in the field confine their work to comparison of handwriting and do not devote to other allied problems of document examination. However it will be seen that besides comparing two handwritings, he Is also expected to make examination of Inks, papers and pen as well. Deciphering of obliterated & invisible writings also comes within the supposed duties of a Handwriting Expert.

Like other processes of Identification, handwriting of every individual **develops some individual features**, which if found sufficient in a particular script, **may become a source of positive Identification**.

From the time a man begins learning, his individual habits go through different experiences to produce their effect and till they are completely imbibed they do not give a clear and distinguishable character to his writing. Mental conception to grasp the outline of a letter drawn by the teacher on the black- board, natural artistic taste, method of holding the pen between the thumb and fingers, and placing it against the paper, balancing the body upon the desk and making clumsy and slow movements are some of the individual acts of the writer which he adopts unconsciously while learning the art of writing. Then come his mental faculties, environs, company and his physical fitness.

There are innumerable motions actuated by different parts' of the body; and its centre of gravity to provide equilibrium and inertia to the writer and balance to the pen which are very important and which undergo slow changes with age. Time alone stabilises writing but begins again after some time to have its sapping effect in old age which produce Tremors, Lack of Speed, Unsteadiness, Angularity, loss of clarity, Dragging effect of pen and a total disregard of Artistic ability and Neatness too, on many occasions. Though notable changes may be introduced in the writing of a man, his contemporary writings will all be exhibiting consistency, individuality, distinction, cohesiveness and rhythm. Once the ability to write is acquired the pen begins to dance over the paper with the same modulation of the action and movements of a dancer.

Writing habits develop from the very stage of learning and go on accumulating till the literary career of the man ceases. Profuse Introduction of individualities comes in old age or when a man begins to lead a very busy life. Some individualities may remain with the writer throughout his life, while others may vary to some extent, but some of them may vanish altogether with the course of life. Physical disabilities, loss of vision, mental diseases, loss of memory, opportunity to write in limited or vast amount and company of learned or illiterate persons cast notable influence on the writing habits.

Although the writing process is a sort of ART but like all other arts it is not a handicraft, it is a transmission of feeling the writer (artist) has experienced.

General or class characteristics which may be common to many writers are general pictorial effect, similar construction of outlines of letters, embellishments specially in capital letters, pen-position, pen pressure and slant. Shading of different parts of the outline of letter, which is more common in English and Urdu Scripts is now dwindling owing to the introduction of hard metal nibs or modern fountain pens, dot pens and sign pens.

There are no mechanical devices to measure pen-pressure or pen- position to be exact minute to the fraction but the experience of expert alone counts for adjudging these two factors.

It is true that slant of letters and their alignment with other letters to form words and their linear expanse are measurable items by precise mathematical instruments but it should be borne in mind that handwriting is not a mechanical reproduction and any dependence on measurements as recommended or suggested by some workers (in the field) will be a potent source of error for the expert employing them for even a probable opinion one way or the other.

If the general characteristics summarily described above do not resemble in two scripts under comparison, a safe conclusion of different authorship can be given if the writing material, both in the questioned and sample writings is enough.

Some experts fail to draw a line of demarcation between general characteristics and individual features of a writer and thus commit mistake in identification. The combined and cumulative effect of the general characteristics at times may produce individuality, but this is not the only basis for making a distinction between two writings. Some broad and individual features of writing are: -

- (1) Individual shape of the outline of a letter.
- (2) Individual style of joining one letter with others to form a word.
- (3) Interspace between letters forming a word.

- (4) Interspace between different words in a sentence.
- (5) Differences in slant of different letters of a word with respect to the normal.
- (6) Peculiarity in lifting the pen and breaking continuation where it is not needed.
- (7) Dragging the pen to join separate words to give a continuous appearance.
- (8) Idiosyncrasies of numerous types.
- (9) Up-hill or down hill tendency to write a line of a passage, and combination of a few individualities to introduce new distinguishable feature and the like.

Apart from the individual features of a writing which provide a positive means of identification a few quasi-similarities which give a strong indication of common authorship in two writings, but which may not be enough to declare the two writings written by one and the same person should also be considered. These are unusual mistakes committed in writing a word, choosing a particular form of alternative spelling of a word, making a particular grammatical mistake, making queer punctuations, writing some selective words with capital letters or *omission* of this type of work and writing some mystic signs in the beginning or end of writing a page.

The **Handwriting Expert** should have a complete knowledge of all these elements of writing and should also have an unerring ability to **analyse each of these elements in correct perspective.**

The Saying "**Experience the name men give to their mistakes**" is literary true in the case of handwriting experts. Modern methods of document examination are based on established principles of science and any deviation from them or any lack of knowledge about them are the frequent mistakes which bring ignomy not only to the expert himself, but to the whole process of science.

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