Art of Calligraphy and Beyond: Arabic-Persian Inscriptions on Decorative Arts objects

Dates and Venue:
15th May, 2015 till 12th July, 2015
Exhibition Hall - 1
First Floor.

The National Museum is currently showcasing an exhibition titled, “Art of Calligraphy and Beyond: Arabic-Persian Inscriptions on Decorative Arts objects”, from its collection.

Calligraphy the art of fancy lettering of a script, is one of the most important aspects of different cultures. Various artifacts, in the Islamic culture, portray the beautiful Arabic-Persian inscriptions, which were artistically blended with flora-fauna designs and add charm to the objects. This exhibition is to highlight these elements.

Decorative arts are related to the design and decoration of objects of utility. Artefacts of this group are crafted for daily, ceremonial and religious uses from a variety of materials like ivory, jade, ceramic, textile, wood, metal, glass, paper, leather and bone.

The present exhibition of fifty-six utilitarian artif acts mainly focuses to show inscriptions on metal ware, wood, textiles and semi precious stones. Apart from Arabic-Persian inscriptions on these artifacts, there are several other qualities also like: different forms of surface ornamentation and aesthetic values. Sometimes it increases its value, especially when the name of the patron or calligrapher is inscribed. The exhibition showcases the vast scope of calligrapher's craftsmen's work, which is not confined to paper and architecture.

Beautiful inscriptions are on metal ware pen-cases, bowls, plates, alams, wooden boxes, mendicant bowls, tawee’z, amulets, bracelets, textiles and costumes. Twenty artifacts of the exhibition are very important as these provide name of the calligrapher, date of manufacturing or name of the owner. These artefacts have been decorated with different techniques like koftagari or damascening, bidri, niello, engraving, writing, printing and embroidering on textiles.

These artifacts have been arranged, as per their utilities, into five main groups; writing implements, religion, faith, tradition and trade. A brass shallow bowl circa 1495 CE is the oldest artifact of this group which belongs to Sultan Sikander Lodi (r.1489-1517) period. It also informs the name of the calligrapher as Mohmood Bin Mahammad Bin Haji Mahmood Farsi. A brass globe informs the maker's name, Mohammad Ibn Illahdad Humayuni Lahori and this was made during the rule of Mughal Emperor Shahjahan (r.1627-1658).

The exhibition has been curated by Dr. Anamika Pathak and Shri Zahid Ali Ansari. Dr. Naseem Akhtar, an authority on Arabic-Persian language has transcribed all the inscriptions on the artifacts. This temporary exhibition will remain open to the public everyday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. except Mondays and national holidays from May 16, 2015 to July 12, 2015.