

# Graphology: science or scam?

On the establishment of Handwriting University in Bangalore, our reporter tries to find out how scientific graphology is

BY CASEY JOHNSON

"What's in a name?" pleads Juliet to Romeo in Shakespeare's star-crossed tragedy. Half a century later the question has become, "who's in a name?" Or, better yet, "who's in your signature, or the notes scribbled during a lecture?" What clues to past and personality can actually be deciphered in the curve of an "s" or the size of a "j"?

Graphology, a branch of psychology long viewed as a street corner diversion somewhere between palmistry and five card monte, made a step toward legitimization with last week's inauguration of the Handwriting University in Bangalore.

I visited the Bangalore Forensic Science Laboratories to see if reading character traits from a ransom note or a suicide letter has a place in the forensic sciences. Laboratory Director, Dr. B.M. Mohan, wasted no time pointing out that his laboratory dealt in document examination, not graphology. As Dr. Mohan dissected a cursive capital 'L' into a series of 35 degree angles, hyperbolas and parabolas, he dissected graphology with similar speed: "If it doesn't include science," he said, "then what good is it? With computers, ink tests and parabolic functions, Dr. Mohan explained, a forensic scientist can tell you if a document is a forgery, but not whether the forger is an introvert or an extrovert.

But because good police work involves analyzing all the angles, the good doctor was on the intercom to his secretary before I left the office. "That's www.handwritinguniver-

stityindia.com; collect all relevant information on graphology and report to me on how we can make use of this information."

An hour removed from Dr. Mohan's sterile, air-conditioned office is the Vishnu Bhavan Lodge. A rent-by-the-hour hotel overlooking City Market, Vishnu Bhavan is temporary home to astrologist Sai Ram Shastri. Sai Ram came highly recommended from an enterprising old man on Avenue Road who reads star signs off the Internet while his customers wait to have Xeroxing done.

At first Sai Ram is confused by my request for a graphology reading. I hold up my hand, clutch an imaginary pencil and scribble in the air. He snatches my hand and stares deeply into the creases of my palm. When I finally convey that it is my handwriting and not my palm that needs to be analyzed, Sai Ram doesn't skip a beat: "O.K., no problem. I'll do that too. For you, just 300 hundred rupees."

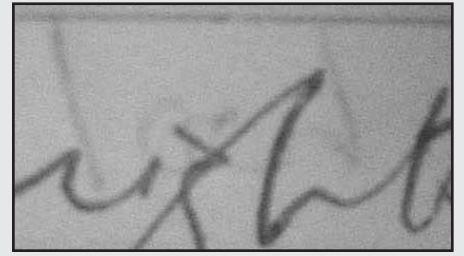
The Handwriting University campus is empty. The walls are freshly painted, the furniture has yet to arrive, and Rafiullah Baig, President of the first graphology institute in India, is visibly excited that his profession has found a home. Baig, a former motivational speaker, explains that over the last five years the science of determining character traits through handwriting existed in India only as a series of seminars held in hotel conference rooms.

Handwriting University India, the child of Handwriting University USA, offers 3-month certificate courses to police officers,

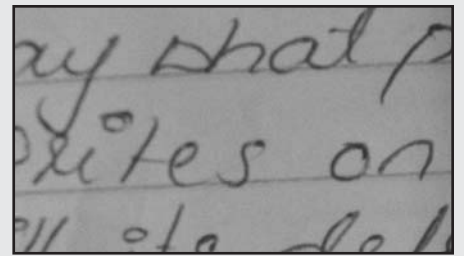
lawyers, and human resource personnel. "These are professionals that constantly deal with people, they need to understand someone in as little time as possible. Graphology makes that possible," Baig explains. But what do they learn for three months? "Handwriting is not about astrology," Baig begins with the air of someone delivering a speech for the thousandth time, "No handwriting will tell your future. Nor can I tell sex or age or even the handedness from a person's writing. This is purely a study of character."

The professional graphologist asserts that based upon the scientific study of neural connectors in the brain, combined with 400 years of graphological data dating back to medieval Italy, accurate ideas on character, concentration level, attitude, and sexual desire can be gleaned from a single signature. This boils down to an examination of the size, slant and depth of individual letters in a signature or line of script. PhD's and websites specializing in the debunking of myths call this process at best a pseudo-science, at worst charlatanism.

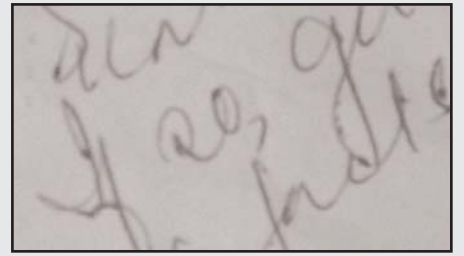
But Baig's work is nothing if not serious. Between teaching classes at the university and keeping up with consultancy work for local technology and medical firms, Baig spends his time analyzing the handwriting of mental patients at Nimhans hospital. Additionally, he has examined the school notebooks of four recent child suicides. After all, Baig explains, if we can determine the authenticity of a document, isn't the next logical step to determine the psychology of the person behind the document?



"Dual personality. No concrete goals."



"Likes to stand out from the crowd all the time. Good with hands."



"Damn sarcastic. Sets unrealistic goals. Frank and blunt."

## Are BMP contractors guilty?

BJP secretary accuses BMP contractors of fleecing paid parking lot users

BY F. MERLIN FLOWER

"You people find out what needs to be done, how they should work I'll direct them to do it," said Lokayukta N. Venkatachala, on the solution to 'pay 'n' park' scam, brought out by the state BJP party.

The BJP had on June 26, submitted a complaint to lokayukta on the alleged irregularities in parking fee collection by contractors of Bangalore Mahanagar Palike (BMP).

According to Aswanth Narayana, the secretary of the state BJP, the contractors of BMP collected an additional two rupees for all parked vehicles. He said that in Malleshwaram, the contractors were given allotment only in seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth cross roads while they collected the parking fee from 11th, 12th, 13th and 14th cross roads too. In many places, some 'rowdy men' were collecting the parking fee paying bribes to BMP and Police, he added.

Syed Riaz, personal assistant to Justice Venkatachala said that BMP had got only about Rs.4 crore as revenue while the contractors got around Rs. 20 crore. C.R.Rajasoma Shekhar, deputy registrar of Lokayukta said following Lokayukta's direction BMP had promised to take action against all found guilty. But no action was taken for three months, said Aswanth that on Wednesday BJP submitted a rejoinder to the earlier complaint, producing as evidence, videotapes and cassettes of contractors and non-contractors asking more money.

Subhash Chandra, special commissioner of BMP said action would be taken in



Paying extra: Are the BMP contractors taking advantage of the motorists?

due course on the officials found guilty and this will take time. Aswanth said that BMP had not given badges and uniforms for its contractors as asked by the party in the complaint, to identify the real contractors of

BMP. Subhash refused to comment on this saying it was an issue between the BJP party and Lokayukta. The Lokayukta said that he had asked suggestion from BJP party, as the legal route was long and time consuming.

## Starting trouble

Costly LPG kits deter auto drivers

BY SOHNA R.

There are five government approved companies, which supply LPG kits in Bangalore, said Nagaraj, superintendent of the Regional Transport Office, Indiranagar. But Selvankumar, an autorickshaw driver in Queens Road said, Longas Italy is the only company approved by the government to supply kits to autorickshaw drivers. Three other autorickshaw drivers in the city also shared this belief.

The Longas LPG kits to be installed in autorickshaws cost Rs. 18,000, said Nadeem, an autorickshaw driver in Shivajinagar. He added that LPG kits in other cities cost Rs. 6000 in other metros. Nagaraj said that he was not aware of the reason for the variation in cost.

Nadeem said that there were other companies in Bangalore, which supplied LPG kits at Rs. 6000. Nagaraj said that since these kits were not government approved, autorickshaws caught using these kits would have their permit cancelled. He added the kits did not have the ISI mark. Autorickshaws, covered by permits granted by the Regional Transport Association to ply in Bangalore city limits, should be fitted with approved LPG kits on or before the dates specified, said Afzal Ahmad Khan, Regional Transport Officer and Secretary, Indiranagar. He added

that the time period is from February 29, 2004 to April 30, 2005.

LPG kits from companies not approved by the government gave better mileage, said Ramamurthy, an auto driver. He said that he preferred these kits and did not want to change to the government-approved kits.

The autorickshaws that have been fitted with the Longas LPG kits have starting problems, said Nadeem. Dinesh Sipani, president of Dars Automobiles Incorporated, said that was normal for all vehicles and could not be blamed on the kits. Dars Automobiles is the distributor of Longas LPG kits.

"Many autorickshaws use petrol because using gas is not dependable," said Nadeem. There are only four filling stations in Bangalore city and they are far away from each other, he said. Dinesh said there were more than four but he was unable to name them. Nagaraj insisted there were only four filling stations but hoped that more would be opened soon.

Dinesh said that LPG cost Rs. 20 per litre while petrol cost Rs. 43 per litre in Bangalore. Selvankumar agreed that LPG was cheaper but the mileage was less compared to the mileage from petrol. According to Nadeem, there is little the autorickshaw drivers can do except protest by going on rallies.

## Touts 'take over' tahsildar's office

BY BHARGAVI KERUR

Two hundred to two fifty touts in the Tahsildar's office premises provide people with caste certificates, income certificates etc. No action has been taken against these people.

There are fixed rates to purchase the certificates. Certificates for schedule caste and tribe will cost Rs 350 and other caste certificates, Rs 250. Income certificates cost Rs 200, Stamp papers costs Rs 15 and to get an affidavit you have to shell out Rs 100.

"These touts are actually considered as unemployed and it is a hurdle to take any action against them," said deputy Tahasildar, Puttegowda. "I have informed my higher authorities. We are planning on how to root out this problem," he added. "No squad is appointed to check for these touts and drive them out," he said. "No cases have been registered with the police," said Shobha. S, advocate, civil court, who handles all the cases related to the deputy commissioner's office. S. Puttamma, a constable said, "The higher officials are not interested in taking action

against these petty touts though they are huge in number."

"What will the police do to us? All they can do is throw us in the lock-up for two days and by the third day you can see us here doing the same business," said Babu, a tout who has been involved in this work for the past five years.

"Why would people come to us if they could get their work done in a day? Applying directly means waiting for more than a week. We cash in on their urgency and earn our livelihood," said Raju, another tout.