CHAPTER – 1
THE ARTISTS AFTER 1947 BREAKING THE SHADOW OF COURT ARTISTS

The words that follow show the importance of art in human life. In fact art is a language that depicts one’s feelings and thoughts in precise manner. Art is a superb way to express human emotions through lines, forms and colours. Art enlightens both the creator and the beholder. It is a medium through which the heart expresses itself. But art not only expresses our emotions and feelings, it also represents the social political environment of its time. I am greatly inspired to study the works of the great artists of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh.

However, we should have a thorough knowledge of the Art scenario prior to the-1947 period before throwing light or having a discussion of the contribution of the artists after 1947. In this connection we have to take up the ‘Jammu School’. From the records we learn that that there are about 38 states in the Pahari region out of which Basohli, Jammu, Nurpur, Kangra, Chamba were prominent. The Art of Painting which flourished in those states till the end of the 19h century is known as Pahari Paintings or Pahari Miniatures.
In these states different styles of Painting originated under the patronage of local rulers. A study of local history throws light on the state of affairs in which this world famous art was created. The study of these particular creations reveals the character and beliefs of the Pahari people who gave shelter as well as love to the refugee artists who came from the plains.

Locally, the style is known as Kalam, and therefore it will be better to adopt the word Kalam for each style or school which originated in different centers.

The importance of the Jammu Kalam is not small to art, gave the primary direction to the modern art movement.

**Jammu Kalam**

Raja Kripal Pal and his painter Devi Dass were the first to start painting in the Pahari area, in which the indigenous talent was brought to the level of great creation. In Jammu Balwant Dev (or Singh) and his painter Nain Sukh Jasrotia were the first to establish Jammu Kalam, in which the indigenous element is nowhere evident. It is clear from the known miniatures of this Kalam that there was no school of Jammu till Circa 1748, Nadir Shah’s invasion in 1738 A.D. compelled the traders and artisans from the plains to take refuge in the peaceful territory of hill
states. At this time Jammu was ruled by the wise and farsighted Raja Ranjeet Deo (1735/1781) AD who gave shelter to so many coming from the plains. Jammu, thus, became a centre of trade and an abode for the peace loving Raja Ranjeet Deo, Balwant Deo was the person who originated the Jammu Kalam. He had a jagir of forty thousand rupees in Saruinsar area of Jammu. (Dated and undated miniatures of this great patron). The earliest survivals of this Kalam and painter Nain Sukh Jasrotia were the main figures of his court as far as the creation of these miniatures is concerned. Two other painters Vijan Shah and Didi are also known to have worked in the service of Balwant Deo. Nain Sukh was the son of Pandit Seu who had come from the plains and settled in Jasrota State, now a ruined place in a forest about 80 Km from Jammu. The earliest dated painting of Balwant Deo belongs to the year 1748. It may be true that he might have formed an atelier round about this date only after refugee artists from the plains had come to find a living place in Jammu. Most of these painters were evidently good portrait painters. The studies of Raja Balwant Deo and people around him, like musicians, signers, dancers, courtiers, attendants and even the animals and birds are of very high order and show the refinement and subtlety of the then existing Mughal portraiture. Careful execution and characterization is of high excellence. Balwant Deo appears in these miniatures in almost every activity of his life.
Jammu Decline

The Jammu Kalam of this period is markedly a Mughal off shoot mixed with the local environments. But no successor of Balwant Deo could continue his work and take it to further heights as it happened in Kangra with the result that a downfall started. The portraits and Durbar pictures of Raja Brij Raj Deo (1781/1787 AD) are evidence of this fact. After the death of Brij Raj Deo the Sikh influence extended to Jammu. The disturbed conditions in Jammu were not favorable for any creative work. The artists were then forced to leave Jammu. After a span of about 40 years, Maharaja Gulab Singh stabilized his regime which could patronize the artists atelier. A great number of paintings were painted in Jammu from Circa 1830 to 1910 AD, of which a collection of about hundred paintings can be seen in the collection of Dogra art gallery, Jammu. Masters like Nand Lal, Ruldoo, Harichand, Chananu and Jagat Ram Chunnia were the painters of this last phase. The works of those masters are known to us and can be seen in the collection of the Dogra Art Gallery Jammu. This Kalam, which was established during the period of Gulab Singh and Ranbir Singh, could not reach the excellence of the previous Kalam but new types of compositions were introduced. Ragni Sindhuri Hindol and Ragdeepak painted by Ruldoo, Krishna and Radha standing in a porch and Krishna playing flute for Radha painted by
Chananu. Hari Chand’s pupil Ruldoo was mainly a painter of portraits. Some of his portraits are done in three dimensions, light and shade, in which the paintings were painted in a realistic manner and some are in groups of gods and goddesses. Jagat Ram followed his master Hari Chand introduced subtle details and depths in the Kalam. He was influenced by photography and printed oleograph which had already come in the market. Sansar Chand was the student of Jagat Ram but did not follow the style of his master. Most of his works are in the western academic style.

**Technical Schools**

With the dethroning of Maharaja Pratap Singh in 1889 the education system of J&K state underwent a dramatic shift. The British Residency and the state council were at the helm of affairs of the state. Education was run along the lines of British India towards centralization and bureaucratization. The state thought itself responsible for the education of its subjects, mostly Muslims. Also it wanted to bring the education system under its preview. But it was common belief that the Dogra state was ill equipped and unwilling to take on this responsibility despite British pressure, its educational policies were ambivalent towards mass education in general and Muslim education in particular.
British educational system propounded the idea of different types of education should be set for different classes. In J.S.Mills and Macaulay’s terms, the elite would gain education through the English language and the rest of the population would be consigned to, if anything, studying their own languages, while receiving western ideas from the elite. In this period Lord Curzon’s viceroyalty marked a turning point in the government’s educational policy. He presented education as more than an intellectual demand in India. According to him, in India, “education was required not primarily as the instrument of culture or the source of learning, but as the key to employment”, the condition of all national advance and prosperity and the stepping stone for every class of the community to higher things.

As early as 1889, Pt.Bishember Nath, Inspector to Schools recommended to the state council that maktabs and pathshalas should be brought under the purview of the department of education. By the beginning of the 20th century, the state had succeeded in introducing important reforms that would begin the process of the state regulation of the educational system.

The council also took steps to encourage private enterprise to promote education. Bhag Ram, the Home and Judicial member-in-charge of the state educational department appealed to the private purses of the
Maharaja, the Resident, the Rajas, the members of the council and other gentlemen by asking them to “prove very liberal in putting our hands in our pockets for subscribing to education.” Though a weak attempt but his intention was to use this money “in providing poor, deserving students with scholarships, fees and so forth”. This resulted in the private institutions growing at a much faster rate than public institutions in this period.

By the early 20th century, the state presented itself as a promoter of education among all subjects of the state. The schools in the state were recognized along lines of the Punjab University syllabus and affiliated to the University. In all administrative as well as educational matters Kashmiri language was shown the back seat even by the Kashmiri Muslim leadership. To commemorate the royal visit of the Prince of Wales in 1905, Maharaja Pratap Singh endowed an arts college in Jammu. In Srinagar it was set up in 1906, the number of scholarships to the middle and high departments of schools was set up by the State, in several parts the girls schools were opened. The Darbar also instituted a number of college scholarships for Kashmiri’s to study in Lahore. A Hindu college was set up in Srinagar in 1905 by Dr. Annie Besant which was taken over by the government in 1911 and rechristianed Sri Pratap college. The Darbar even recognized the need to encourage education
amongst the Muslims of the valley and sanctioned scholarships for Muslim boys studying in Srinagar High School while also appointing an Arabic teacher for the school.

As the state considered education to be the preserve of the elite, it became clear in 1907 that the it lagged in developing schemes to impart education to the vast majority of its subjects. The British Resident, Sir Francis Young-husband impressed on the foreign minister to improve the educational department of the state so that best education could be given to various classes. At this stage the Maharaja proclaimed that mass education could be accomplished only if:

Institution is an obviously useful and helpful as food, clothing and fresh air, and the aim should be to make everyone fit for some definite calling in life, to give each the opportunity of developing himself to the fullest, to make agricultural class better agriculturists, the merchant class good businessman, the artisans useful handicraftsmen, the fighting class brave soldiers, the ruling class efficient governors and the intellectual class thinkers and writers. The ancient should retain the glory of the ancient civilization with all the old manliness, courtliness, charity and respect for parents and for authority and add to the thoroughness, energy and scientific, practical and public spirit of the present day.
The Dogra state virtually copied the British Indian administrative structure for its educational system along with its ideological content. In the matter of State educational policy in this period, it shows clearly that the Dogra state did not conceive of Kashmiris as citizens and did not intend to make them citizens of the state through education. There was class discrimination. The inspector of schools suggested that low caste Kashmiri Muslims, Meghs and Dooms, should not be sent to schools. The Headmaster of the Hindu High School, Srinagar, expressing dislike for the fact of upper class Hindu and Muslim boys studying along side those of lower classes. He stated, “The Hindus and the high class Mussalmans will not like to see their children learn a profession while surrounded by the other Mussalman children, till these come up to the standard of Hindu children or the children of high class Mussalman. It is not at all desirable that the children of the Hanjis (boatmen) and sweepers and the like should be allowed to mix with other children.

The State intended to give different types of education to lower classes. The Punjabi officials who ran the state felt the need for economic returns on their educational reform policies. This was possible only if technical education was imparted to the agriculturalists and artisans so that they could be made more efficient at their respective occupations.
Kashmiri lower classes, devoid of a guarantee of political and social rights, had to remain satisfied with technical and vocational training, which was formalized with the establishment of the Amar Singh Technical School, Srinagar, in 1914.

By 1915 the Darbar had brought all religious educational institutions of the valley under its direct control. The status of these schools was regularly monitored by Educational officers. The staff and standard was not up to the mark but since the aim of these institutes was to educate the backward community, the Darbar continued to sanction the grants, year after year.

Colonial intervention had a drastic effect on the princely state of J&K. It not only shaped the forms of legitimacy employed by the Dogra princely house to rule the Kashmir valley but it also led to the centralization and bureaucratization of State structures along lines of British India.

Technical schools were established in Jammu (1905) and in Srinagar (1906). The Maharaja Technical schools imparted training in various fields like clay modeling, drawing, painting, pottery. The three year diploma was awarded to the trainees. Here in Jammu, J Mukherjee was the first Principal in Amar Singh Technical Institute. He was trained
in the Western style of paintings. Sansar Chand was the Instructor there then. Mukherjee or others like him in this field made the foundation firm. In Kashmir Amar Singh Technical Institute a Mr. Andrews was the first principal. The Amar Singh Technical Institute gave diploma to their students from the city and guilds of London.

This time passed out alumni’s who took jobs as artists in different depts.. Some of them joined the Industrial Training Institute as trainers, one of them was Chandu Lal Ji.

Sansar Chand, Chandu Lal Ji, Shiv Nath Raina, D.N.Wali, Pratap Singh, these were the products of the technical school. Sansar Chand, inspired by his guru who was a Miniature painter (and in the beginning most of whose work done by Sansar Chand) based on the religious scenes, secular and mythological scenes, started with Miniatures and ended up with abstraction. At that time Kashmiri painting was in practice. But after the opening of technical schools the students were trained in western style of Painting. Most of them produced landscapes and portraits, but Sansar Chand contributed a lot in the J&K Arts scenario because if he had not broken from the miniature tradition of art, the artists of J&K would not have found a proper place in local or the world art scenario. This all happened when he came in contact with Mukherjee or joined the Amar Technical Institute. The last phase trainers from the ITI
imparted training to the trainees of IMFA (Institute of Music and Fine Arts, which is under the patronage of the J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages.
HARI CHAND

Hari Chand is still remembered by older people for his fine delicacy of lines. He was the grandson of Nand Lal of Kangra. He came to Jammu with his two sons Chananu and Ruldo (both artists). Most of the paintings of Hari Chand, done on Durga and Ram Panchayat, are a tribute to his art. He died in the beginning of the 20th century. Most of his paintings are in the Dogra Art Museum. In his works the local folk elements can be seen and the colours of the paintings treated very richely. The general characteristics of the phari miniature can also be seen because these artists were migrated from the states of the phar.

In Rag Basant Krishna is playing flute and the listeners are enjoying the flute. Composition is divided into three planes in the background Artist has tried to show the vegetative elements like trees and the trees are also shown in a realistic manner. The play of light can be seen in the treatment of the trees. The main subject is painted in the middle Krishna is shown in a (Chudidar) and frock with dupatta and gopies are shown in reds, green and blues but the friends of Krishna shown in whites green with colourful dupatas and the third division is painted without element, the patch of white can seen and it gave the rest to the viewer eye.
Most of the religious, mythological subjects painted by Hari Chand Dhritrastra and Arjun negotiation is one of the example of his creative skill. Composition is master divided into the planes one is background and another is fore ground. Again the artist has tried to divide the background with the use of colour. The main subject is depicted in the fore ground. Artist had tried to gave local look with showing the folk dresses.
JAGAT RAM CHUNNIA

Maharaja Pratap Singh, who succeeded Maharaja Ranbir Singh was interested in religious subjects. But this enthusiasm for Jagat Ram did not last long as the artist was the painter of hundreds of religious paintings.

He had seen oil paintings presented to the Maharaja and was much impressed with those. He, too, wanted to indulge in this new medium, but it was difficult to learn the secret of oil media in Jammu in those days as he lacked proper training. A chance artist visitor was a state guest for some days. Impelled by curiosity Jagat Ram managed to watch furtively the artist at work. He did see colours poured out of tubes on mahogany palette. But this could not be a lesson to learn the oil media. This inadequate information did not bring him success with the oil colours. He painted several portraits which lacked technique. Thick colours applied on canvas produced passive result. He had some success in miniature which was his own field.

The influx of prints from abroad and from Ravi Verma Press, Bombay, flooded the market, which was a fatal blow to the indigenous art and to all the Pahari painters. The demand for pictures of deities indicating a fervour for religion, was jeopardized by cheap and handy prints that saved people from heavy cost and several visits to the artist.
The absence of light and shade, a three dimensional effect in old Pahari pictures, and the realism on the other hand, which looks more attractive to a man in the street, compelled Indian Artists to withdraw from their traditional style. They tried to adopt the new idioms and forms with their limited palette. But the situation so created was beyond their control. The income of Jagat Ram dwindled considerably, aggravated the problem depressed by a wretched life.

With water colour he tried to assimilate new value, which did not fit in properly. He tried to give solidity to his faces. The last stage of his life was a gladiator’s struggling ineffectually for something tangible to give to posterity. He once said, “whereas I am growing old, infirm and my opponent, my spouse, my art, grows stronger and matured”. It was a figurative parallelism. A most pathetic confession by an ardent spirit. Not withstanding this defeatist attitude, he was always seen with his work upto the age of seventy five. He died in 1922 squeezed by want and misery. He had to embrace realism simply to please his mis-informed customers at the cost of his own health and indigenous art. He was a learned tantric. His painting of Sarb in the closing years of his life is a very artistic miniature containing numerous figures in various forms and poses. This picture took three to four years to complete. Chunnia had to
prepare several copies for the approval of Maharaja Pratap Singh. It is a rare theme but it was executed marvelously by Chunnia.
PANDIT SHIV NATH RAINA

Shiv Nath Raina has a unique, distinct and outstanding status in the domain of art and culture of the Jammu and Kashmir State. He mastered the field of Indian classical style of painting. He qualified with distinction in painting and decorating from Amar Singh Technical Institute (which is no more now) also he had a diploma from the “City and Guilds” of London. He was a most dynamic, versatile, progressive and multi-talented personality.

Prior to independence, and it was during the British regime, that he completed his studentship and took the job of a drawing master in the State education department. The principal of A.S.T.I.(Amar Singh Technical Institute), Andrews, was the key man to help him in getting the above mentioned job. He worked as an art master in the Amar Singh Technical Institute. Once in the early forties, he was posted as drawing master in Babapora middle school with a special grade. Here he decided to bring the school to limelight through an extraordinary interest in the teaching of drawing and creating a drawing museum cum art gallery in the school itself. His dream was fulfilled as the school became famous throughout the state for the teaching of drawing, its arts and crafts museum cum gallery and it produced some of the most famous artists of the J&K State. He produced wonders by his brush and imagination. He
appeared to be the embodiment of thousand years of deep rooted Kashmiri culture having full knowledge of vedic and religious scriptures.

Besides being a famous artist in his own oriental style of painting. He was a master craftsman, wherever he was posted his drawing room was just like an art gallery cum museum, a collection of exquisite artifacts, besides paintings of varied subjects styles, a media created by his students. He usually used distemper paints but handled all the medium with equal ability including water, oil, pastel, pencil, crayon and chalk. His extraordinary pencil portrait of Maharaja Hari Singh in Raj Tilak ceremonial dress while exchanging hands to reach Dr.Karan Singh is appreciable.

He got prizes in different fields of painting such as portraiture, landscaping, Indian classical style of painting etc. etc. He was awarded a gold medal (1st prize) for his painting titled ‘calamity’.

His contemporaries in Kashmir, were also eminent artists in their own fields viz. Sat Pal Kampasi, master in portraiture. Dina Nath Wali (landscaping), Mohiuddin (sketching). Those were the days of artistic renaissance, the period around and after the independence of India. Art, music, drama and literature were forging ahead.
Some of the most outstanding artists such as late Sh.G.R.Santosh, Lt.Sh.Mohan Raina, Lt Sh.S.N.Bhatt, Lt.Sh.Suraj Prakash, Sh.Jaggar Nath and Sh.A.N.Vaishnavi were his disciples. Apart from these almost all the young budding artists of the state especially the valley would ask him for guidance.

Shiv Nath would lay stress on drawing. He thought that first of all one should try to be perfect in drawing from nature itself. He was very much opposed to start with distortions, and isms from the very beginning.

In 1958, the tableau from the J&K State at the republic day parade, “Winter in Kashmir” designed and executed by him won the first prize for the first time for the J&K State.

Shiv Nath also had a flair for classical and light singing. He had his own harmonium and sitar presented to him, on his distinguishing performance while he was an active member of the first dramatic club of Kashmir, playing different roles.

In short Pt. Shiv Nath was a colossus of a man, a legendary figure. He had the touch of a genius. He lived up to the dictum, “In all things be men”.
SANSAR CHAND

By the early twentieth century Indian art was totally dominated by the realistic taste of the west. The cheap oleograph and photography changed the cultures, whole vision. The traditional art was even ridiculed by the intelligentia. This was the period when Sansar Chand came into contact with Jagat Ram through his father. Under Jagat Ram Chunnia’s tutelage, Sansar Chand was introduced to Pahari miniature. He learnt handling of brush and the application of colour. His not having interest and failure in studies, along with financial difficulties, he was compelled to abandon college. Though Jagat Ram was no more, Sansar Chand continued his practice with full determination. In order to support the family financially, his father wanted him to join any type of service but it was impossible as he had no degree or diploma. He devoted himself totally to art.

Continuous study and voracious reading was his constant endeavour. He thought vision could be widened only through books and illustrations he could lay hands on. He had no particular pattern in view but only occasional visits to the Exhibitions in Lahore inspired him a bit. Originally he had some practice in the brush which proved fruitful in developing his personal style, He was influenced by the Bengal school of art, originated by Abinindra Nath Tagore. He owned different styles but
there was no concrete shape or success. He was of the opinion that creative imagination and technical skill make the true work of art. His answer to the pertinent question was. To quote him “Mine is a village shop, where all sorts of commodities of everyday life are sold. The scale is small, quantity limited and wares range from eatables to a few sheets of cloth, from rustic medical aids to toilet articles.” Later his main aim in life was to rehabilitate art in the land where from it had been uprooted: to carry light to the next torch bearer. The study of philosophy has often been reflected in his work. He has mostly painted allegorical pieces. He quotes an art critic; ‘colour is the child of art, but it is also the master’s master’. It cannot be scientifically controlled by him, like drawing.

Abstraction is still in its initial stage. Art cannot stand the test of time by showing mirror to nature, it is something of a reaction to nature. To quote F. Rutter, it is not what a thing is, but the way in which it is done that makes it a work of art. Accuracy is an intellectual quality and art is an affair of the emotions. The ultra-modernist bases his art on shapes and colour-effects. Actually art is emotional and intellectual both. Art is a sort of bridge through which the artist crosses to his addressee.

Well, the artist is famous outside Jammu not only as a painter in the traditional style, but as an art critic. His paintings have won recognition from many on critics. He has been an Art Teacher in the
Technical Institute and was of the first curator of the Dogra Art Gallery, Jammu. The pupils of Sansar Chand like O.P Sharma Sharthi, V.R Khajuria, Dev Dass, T.S Batra were inspired by his style of work like watercolors, portraits and other techniques, besides they have their own individual style.
DINA NATH WALI

Dina Nath Wali basically belonged to the “Paradise on Earth”, one of the blessed spots of nature. Wali was thoroughly magnetized by the natural colourful beauty pervading throughout the valley. His mind being simply enchanted and absorbed, he worked with the true devotion and ecstasy of his own compositions.

His early education was done in Srinagar and after doing three year course in painting at Amar Singh Technical Institute, Srinagar, he came to Calcutta for his further training. After spending six years there, he returned back to Srinagar and devoted himself to landscape painting in transparent water colours. In 1939 Govt. of Kashmir awarded a Gold Medal to him. In 1940, the academy of Fine Arts Calcutta bestowed on him a highly commended medal. The acquaintance with late Mr. Percy Brown in Calcutta proved very fruitful as he helped Wali considerably in his career. In 1953 he opened Wali’s one man show in Nedous Hotel Srinagar, which won him accolades. He held his second one man show in 1954 in Bombay at Jehangir Art Gallery. The show was inaugurated by Shri S.K.Patil. His third one man show was held in Delhi in the “All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society Gallery” in the same year. This show was the outcome of encouragement by the Bombay Press and public. His third show was inaugurated by late Sardar K.M.Panikar. The response by
Delhi press and public was equally encouraging. His fourth one man show, inaugurated by Dr. Kali Das Nag, was organized in Calcutta in Artistry House in 1956. The notable Indian Art historian, Walis O.C. Gangoli addressed the audience. Gangoli highly commended Walis works on display. The artist had several other shows in Delhi for the edification of artists, art lovers and for those who are attracted by the charm of the natural, bewitching beauty of Kashmir.
CHANDU LAL

Chandu Lal Dogra was a talented artist who has developed his art with tireless devotion and has carved a special niche for himself in art field.

He was born in Bahu village near Jammu in a poor household. His mother expired when he was just three years old. He was not interested in formal school education. Inspite of book reading he had special attraction for drawing subject. He left school for not having inclination towards studies and poverty too became the root cause. Then he joined ‘Technical School Jammu’ where he completed three year course in clay modeling and pottery. After this he did three years course in painting in ‘Amar Singh Technical Institute’ Srinagar with scholarship.

He proceeded forward with new inspirations, with new curiosity and inner vision when he came to Jammu joined as teacher in ‘Technical School Jammu’. Here he took utmost advantage, with the literature he came across, which was associated with painting. Here he had good facilities while working with Shri Sansar Chand. He tried to go further but he could not go ahead due to the unfavourable circumstances after completing matriculation examination. Numerous difficulties in life did not deter this courageous artist to lessen the devotion towards art. Among
other artists of his time he was the forerunner in landscape painting and portrait. He has given life to beautiful sceneries of Duggar in his paintings.

Most of the landscapes done by Chandu Lal are from his own surroundings. He was a master in portraiture. The characteristics of his work is, he used thick oil colours in his paintings.