CHAPTER FOUR
DELHI AS THE CAPITAL OF PRINTMAKING

THE ROLE OF SENIORS AND FOLLOWERS
KANWAL KRISHNA, 1910-1993
DEVAYANI KRISHNA
JAGMOHAN CHOPRA
JAI ZHAROTIA
INDIAN PRINTMAKERS' GUILD
DATTATRAYA Apte
MOTI ZHAROTIA
SUBBA GHOSH
CHAPTER FOUR
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THE ROLE OF SENIORS AND FOLLOWERS
Survey and Brief Background

Due to some particular reasons, Delhi became the most important centre of art in India after independence, that is after 1947, when many artists from other centres in the country moved in there. The major factor of this consistent movement was the tragedy of partition, which forcibly shifted the group of Lahore artists to migrate to Delhi, and shortly thereafter, they formed the Delhi Silpi Chakra, which proclaimed the motto of 'art is life.'

The artists of 'Silpi Chakra' had developed an awareness that helped to relate their work to the emerging conditions of the people. They also made a valiant effort in taking a new direction and one by one each member entered into mainstream international art that overcame all indigenous efforts to produce art related to the heritage and culture. Such was the leaning that Delhi art scene was radically transformed.

The widespread growth of art activity in post-independent India owes much to the Lalit Kala Akademi. This national academy was founded in Delhi in 1955. It is run by a general council comprising mostly of artists, through its executive board. The Akademi's encouragement of the arts is both direct and indirect. Apart from holding and sponsoring exhibitions and publications, it also assists other art organizations in their work.

Jaya Appasamy wrote about the important role played by this Akademi; "...It projects the image of Indian art abroad by sending works to all the important international shows. Besides, it arranges for the art of other countries to be seen in India. It has a
complex programme that varies every year including seminars, artists’ camps, lectures and film shows. The relevant committee finalizes each project and the Akademi’s staff undertakes the work of presenting the programmes. The Akademi also organizes the great exhibition of international art – ‘The Triennale’ after interval of every three years. The first Triennale was simultaneously held at Rabindra Bhavan and the National Gallery of Modern Art in Delhi during the year 1968.

L.K.A. also publishes the Lalit kala Contemporary Art journal, which widely serves the interests of artists, critics and art colleges in particular and the public at large. This magazine also presents to the outside world an interesting picture of art situation in India. Before we go further, let us first quote the Delhi based author and art critic Keshav Malik, “On my return, aesthetically there was a new beginning and a ‘new’ Delhi. At first, Satish Gujral, Gade, Gaitonde, K.C. Aryan, Laxman Pai and several others struck one... Then the rounds began with the exhibitions - Ukil School, Kulkarni’s Studio, AIFACS, Silpi Chakra, Triveni Kala Sangam, etc. It was for me a new birth.” The government had set up a department of art that later on became an independent college in 1964. Some of the artists of Silpi Chakra took up teaching at this art institute, and soon, they brought fresh and vivacious approaches. In fact, they were not only able to infuse a certain dynamism in the art scene of the capital, but also added, with a sense of pride and hope, their share of creative ability to interpret the educational programmes of the institute in a progressive manner according to the need of the times.

With artists like Swaminathan, the desire to introduce anarchy into the Indian art scene was quite curious. Breaking the professional discipline which the older painters had in their way quite admirably established, he proposed to regroup the forces on a principle more conducive, in his eyes, to the Indian genius evoking the magical potency of the folk and tribal cultures that are still alive and contemporary. Zealously, he pooled together a few other colleagues and formed ‘Group 1890’ in 1962. Although the group did have a striking manifesto, its achievements, as it turned out to be, were but a trickle. Undoubtedly art activity was growing constantly and steadily. Both the decades of the 50’s and the 60’s were decades of countless number of solo and group exhibitions - national and international – that were held at Delhi. Countries like U.S.A., Germany, France, England,
Italy and others held their exhibitions to show the progressive art movements in their countries.

Generally speaking, this period was very important in the saga of Plastic Arts. In this era, the picture of fine arts activities gradually changed and Delhi gained a place of prestige in all spheres of art. In addition, we can see a healthy atmosphere and a dramatic progress took place in all the fields of fine arts, especially in printmaking. I would like to elaborate on this phenomenon by quoting Charles Fabri’s statement concerning Delhi’s art activities around the mid-60s. “Artists from Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi, Baroda, Andhra came to show their works in the capital, and this means a very large number of exhibitions, far too many in number, but not always so good in quality. Other large cities in the world, Paris or New York, London or Venice, have their quota of rubbish, and quite a lot is shown that is second rate. If we can not beat New York, with its pop art, we are sure to be in the forefront with hopeful amateurs. And as hardly any, except a very few artists in India, can live by their brush or chisel.”

By this time, India herself has changed at a phenomenal pace during this period; day after day we see; as interest mounts, the artists begin to exploit all the novel processes and techniques, especially in the field of printmaking. The full-fledged printmakers gradually emerged and they quickly took their proper position in the current art scene.

As we know, each artist - as a creator – can freely present his own form of truth. Each is a special new revelation of form and feeling. The aspect of the period allowed the modern artist-printmakers to draw freely from foreign sources. Modern Indian printmaking processes, themes and aspects from now on became numerous and international. Concurrently, we see a number of Indian artists being influenced by what they see happening on the international arena. This is understandable. It was, of course, rightly to be so. Visiting printmakers may also have learnt something from their Indian colleagues. This two-way traffic of art and artists is certainly a healthy phenomenon. One may observe that this period produced, for contemporary Indian art scene, the new painter-printmaker, who is the individual interpreter of his times, and collectively created an art, in which the face of the epoch is revealed. As a matter of fact, printmaking at that time got further encumbered with a foreign identity and only a very small audience is tutored in the subtleties of print process. The beliefs put into practice and the dedication
shown in what was then a new venture, culminated into a peak of achievement. It was the forces of that fertile and imaginative period, which created the pressures and formed the present plateau of achievement.

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The process of printmaking in Delhi falls under three distinct phases: the first from 1954-1964, which was initiated by Kanwal Krishna. It is also the most distinctive phase. Then, followed the second post-independence phase overlapping, between 1964 to 1970, with what had done before and what came after. We can say, the second phase is the academic phase centred at the College of Art, where Somnath Hore, as a teacher, quietly and modestly inculcated the craft and practice of printmaking. In fact, we should put in mind that after these two phases, there is yet another profound and technically advanced phase that has come to cause the real renaissance of contemporary Indian printmaking. I think, we should first go back to the late 50s and the early 60s to see that there were a few Delhi-based painter-printmakers, who did some significant prints. They had held several shows in Delhi and abroad. The senior-most of them was Laxman Pai, whose prime period of printmaking was when he was in Paris and London early during this period, and whose series on the life of the Buddha, for instance, is well known. Jeevan Adalja did powerful drawings and aquatint prints in a personalized manner, rather like the expressionist-fantastic vein. Sudhiranjan Bhushan did some excellent collages like studies in the silk-screen medium to explore its possibilities and to discover the core of its inherent qualities. Shanti Dave, the creative printmaker, whose prime period of graphic creation was when he was in Baroda, where he had done a lot of linocuts during the early 60s and was probably the first to work on large size. He was fascinated by the illustrative possibilities of the graphic medium. His illustrations of Geeta Govinda are clean, crisp and sharply cut arrangements of simple black-and-white areas embellished with texture and line, but because of their small size, they almost look like Indian miniatures in black and white.

It was the year 1965, when India's first significant graphic arts show was held in Delhi. The Delhi Silpi Chakra organized this exhibition. It was a modest, but significant show consisting of fifty-one works by thirty-three artists. Notable contributions were from Jagmohan Chopra, Bhupendra Karia, Shanti Dave, Manhar Makwana, Jayant Parikh, R.
Vardarajan, Krishna Reddy, Akbar Padamsee, Laxman Pai, Kanwal Krishna, Devayani Krishna and Somnath Hore. The show had brought talent from across the country. It influenced many printmaking shows to be held during the years of late 60s. Indian printmakers caught up, having grasped the perfect know-how. This evolution caused a great impact on the contemporary Indian printmaking. Going further into the decade of 70s, we may see, many foreign graphic shows having been held at Delhi, and created a strong impact on the Indians’ style and technique. By this time, we can see some notable new names beginning to emerge and swiftly taking their place in the printmaking scenario, such as Jai Krishna, Paramjeet Singh, Jai Zhurotia, Manjit Bawa, Anupam Sud and a few others. Strangely enough, those painter-printmakers tried to internationalize the contemporary image of India either by distorting the human form or by dehumanizing art into an abstract expression. They discarded the earlier chromolithographs of Ramen Chakravarty and Y.K. Shukla and also protested against the so-called decorative patterning and wispy sentimentalization in art.

Relevant to this upheaval movement of the mid-sixties is the writing of Gayatri Sinha; “It was Kanwal Krishna, the doyen of printmakers, who, with his ‘Lama Milarepa’ series, gave printmaking some prominence. Subsequently, Somnath Hore broke new ground by pouring paper pulp into a cement surface and creating his famous ‘Wounds’ series of graphics around the mid-sixties. Over the years, artists like K.G. Subramanyan, whose silk-screen print won an award at first Triennale, Jyoti Bhatt and Jagmohan Chopra experimented with new techniques. In the sixties, “a group of famous painters - M.F. Husain, Tyeb Mehta, Gaitonde, Akbar Padamsee, Ram Kumar and Laxman Pai *1* made limited edition prints that they priced at Rs.25 each. There were no takers. Today these prints are collector’s choice.”

The period between 1965-69 was the peak in printmaking activities. There was a volcanic upheaval every where in the city with new names coming on the scene and acquiring limelight owing to their innovative prints. The then young Satish Gupta showed considerable talent in the medium. The artist managed yellows and reds to much greater effect in his works titled ‘The Last Stage’ and ‘Yellow Bottle.’ “Somnath Hore was already among the foremost etchers in the county. His prints during this period broke new ground in as much as they combined the intricate techniques of printmaking with
figurative painting, so that they had naturalness as well as deliberation. His acid hues were masterly depicted to combine with other elements, in affectionate fairy tales like ‘Women, Child, Birds,’ ‘The Flower’ and ‘Man and Woman.’ The embossed touch was particularly fine. Some works contained a lacquer-like red, done on material other than paper.”

Zarina Hashmi - now living in New York - created delightful work in this period, clean, uncluttered and sophisticated. She employed rich hues. The balance she maintained between mossy greens and subtle warms being always refreshing. Zarina had developed a striking process, to build up her plates by using wood strips and additive treatment, whereby she was able to achieve a distinctive quality of suggesting both the effects of collage and woodcut. Her ‘Fight’ series is excellent. The designs of the compositions are strong and affective. In her plain black-white series, where the whirling groves provide a forceful sense of movement, revealing her excellent mastery of the art of prints. The now expatriate artist Bimal Banerjee, is an outstanding printmaker. He proves that he is the most energetic and experimental of the younger generation. Bimal has evolved an austere abstract style that is taut, direct and expressive as a graphic form. His second exhibition in Delhi in the early 70s proved him to be one of the top practitioners of the art form. ‘Eclipse,’ ‘Enchantment’ and ‘Hope’ were some of the titles. Some were rich in colour; others had a dry embossed feel. The coloured ones created the dream, whereas the dry ones had reverberations of prehistoric cave painting. Bimal’s intaglios can be exciting and pretty, as the artist had a likable facility with white and rust colours. He lives now abroad.

Jai Krishna is a profound expert printmaker, a fine intelligence is evident in his prints, combining linear elements and symbols with profuse, yet idiosyncratic graphic qualities. Reds and variegated black are the colours that form prints of concentration in his compositions. Jai Krishna lives now in Lucknow and he is no more an active printmaker.

Dozens of printmakers came from all regions of the country to exhibit their prints in the capital during this peak period between 1965-1969. We have to drop many names, to focus only on very few. Three names deserve utmost significance: Jyoti Bhatt, Dipak Banerjee and Paneer Selvan. Keshav Malik wrote about their exhibitions, “Jyoti Bhatt’s etchings are a bit too well groomed, and excessively cultivated aestheticism often is. The artist uses Western motifs in some works, in others; he juxtaposes the same with Indian ones. In either case, the effect is hybrid. Dipak Banerjee’s colour prints are as good as
lyrics, each of his works, being a small stimulating verse, and all of them have an illusion of depth and an unusually fine, harmonious blend of the acidic and stringent colours. The impression of Bengali script makes for a pleasantly startling affect. Paneer Selvam, in at least three of his etchings, claims to be a good printmaker. In his work titled ‘Birth’, the artist creates an inner world that has a truly fantastical dimension and where hotness enclosed in blackness become symbolical of birth. Here, texture and subject have been splendidly blended to form rich, suggestive experience.”

There were some significant graphic exhibitions that came from Western countries, the most notable being that of American prints. Many of those prints have the strong bite of colour. So, there are more than one good reason for positive reaction to these works, there is no sombreness and no puritanical hesitance. At the same time, there are a good variety of designs. All forms of techniques are involved with novel results. Some of these prints acquire delightfulness by their intelligent colouring. Others, by sparse but firm execution of drawing on white paper, are enchanting. Americans insisted on coming again with the ‘14 Americans.’ In this significant show that ensued, they apparently changed their attitude and did impressive abstract watercolour and had some excellent paintings with only few prints. May be this exhibition was one of the best sent to India from the United States. There were also many foreign graphic shows in the same period. What we have done here is only a brief approach to those days of the 60s and the 70s. However, let us try to put some significant printmaking activities under the light, focusing on the core of what we think is more relevant to our objective.

During these auspicious years, we begin to see the printmaking art scenario already acquiring the momentous power. The art collectors and the art lovers became more knowledgeable and had good sense of appreciation to this kind of art works. Art critics as well as historians started writing about graphic exhibitions. ‘Marg’ magazine published special issue on Indian graphic art in 1966 and later on 1983. Lalit Kala, a contemporary magazine did the same in its issue number 11 edited by Jaya Appasamy with the assistance of S.A. Krishnan. In brief, the whole situation is completely changed in all the regions of the country. All the media started taking serious attention of fine arts. Universities and institutes started to teach printmaking techniques and also opened special departments for training and instruction in printmaking. Prominent magazines and
newspapers started to interview the printmakers and focus their prints in attractive presentation. Camps and workshops are regularly taking place to play their role in this field. Many relevant facilities started to be available, such as printing inks and printmaking materials as well as handmade paper suitable for graphic art. In short, printmaking has about come of age.

Before going farther, let us look from a different point of view. I think that nearly all the above mentioned developments culminate in individual benefits. We can not see any printmaker that may take on his shoulders the responsibility to transfer his own experience and know-how of proper and advanced techniques to those who are poorer in this field, especially the younger generation of printmakers. This role seems to be left to the doyen of Indian printmaking Kanwal Krishna and his wife Devayani Krishna and on to the livewire of Delhi's printmaking Jagmohan Chopra, with the help of some of his active colleagues. On the other hand, we see that Somnath Hore had no significant role in the promotion of Delhi's printmaking, owing to some particular personal reasons that created negative attitude against his intentions, especially after the mid-sixties, when he started to feel depressed. The situation inside the Delhi College of Arts had changed due to the new administration, causing annoying inconvenience. Somnath, as a teacher, guided a section of the students and scholars with rather unequal talents. A perfectionist in technique, but somewhat conservative in his approach to printmaking, Hore also enthused his students to make prints. But in fact, he was not the kind of person, both as a teacher and artist, who wished to create a group movement or who wanted to direct such a group outside the college, or give them extra-experimental experience.

It was Jagmohan Chopra, the active experimentalist and young colleague of Somnath, who realized that the need of the day was to form an active working group comprising of earnest and talented printmakers, who should not give up printmaking after leaving the college, either due to lack of facilities or because of a change of interest into another area. Meanwhile Chopra was a popular teacher willing to give a great deal of opportunities to his students to practice their graphic creations in the printmaking press located in his own living room, giving the paternal love and a helping hand in extending them his expertise and his intimate devotion. For this kind of qualities, we consider this prominent active printmaker, with his zeal and administrative skills, for more than 25
years in the same field, doing his best to achieve the distribution of the prints done by his
group to some prominent associations and museums, especially the Chandigarh Museum.

The ‘Group 8’

The ‘Group 8’ of Delhi, is an association of working printmakers, most of whom
are senior students of the Delhi College of Art where Chopra has taken over teaching
graphics from Hore in 1967. These young artists are prone to all the temptations and
pitfalls of inexperience and have yet to mature conceptually. Their preoccupation with all
sorts of abstraction and non-objective mannerism is understandable. They find the
singular effects of the graphic technique intriguing and thrilling and make them happy
with their fresh discovery.

As a matter of fact, it is mostly due to Chopra’s keen interest in the students that
they have been able to do so well in recent years. Besides they also joined hands to
produce works that hold considerable promise. Most of the Group’s printmakers were
women and there was much uniformity in the Group, in addition to good technical
knowledge of the medium. It was hard to make one’s choice, but Sunita Kanvinde
produced works as pretty as butterflies. She was obsessed with spheres, as if with a feeling
for space, neatness and order. Lakshmi Dutt exhibited her ‘Child’ in agitated red zigzag.
Umesh Varma’s works are intelligent and a bit filmy.

Anupam Sud’s interesting compositions were already in evidence. Though
working in an apparently narrow ambiance, these artists were trying to turn their
limitations into strength. But the feel of texture was in all their bones. The delight was in
surface as if in bark and skin. But when they come to the realm of colours with their
sulphur hues and a pre-organic purity like burning metals or cool frozen planetary
surfaces, they seem to be sure about their work as well as their approach to the medium.
Most of the above mentioned printmakers have come to the scene late in the day but they
have struggled with the medium expertly. At times repetitive, they have nevertheless been
striving for the personal stamp. One of those creative, young printmakers is Jai Krishna,
who first started doing intaglio with Somnath Hore, but soon dispensed with the metal
plate and the usual acid biting process but combined the directness of engraving with the
textural possibilities of soft ground etching and aquatint. He built his plate with acrylic
on board. The liquid acrylic was poured on this base and then the line was incised with a
knife; this required a direct connection between the eye and the hand. We can say that this process will create an amazing secret of draughtsmanship, which lay in bringing together the design perceived and the emotion stimulating it. The knife that incised created a whole area of activated small forms with a band of sensitive lines that held the design. His print, usually pulled in the intaglio method, had a rich all over quality,\(^4\) and range from the picturesque to strong compositions that resemble either faded hieroglyphics or strangely sensuous fossils. These works rich in texture are generally formal and decorative or abstract.

The first ‘All India Exhibition’ of prints was organized by the ‘Group 8’ in 1969. Actually the ‘Group 8’ has held annual exhibitions of the works of the members since its inception. It also held a retrospective exhibition of Krishna Reddy’s work in 1970. So we see that the ‘Group 8’ is a serious society not only of printmakers but also as print sponsors. The ‘Group 8’ also proposes to hold such shows of senior printmakers in India. Three members of this ‘Group,’ Anupam Sud, Priya Mukerjee and Sunita Kanvinde were awarded Commonwealth Scholarships. Despite many hardships the society has been able to have a headquarters and maintains a graphic workshop. Chopra created the opportunity to discuss ideas about his new process, and managed to support artists who might otherwise have given up. This financial support was through purchases for permanent collection of Chandigarh Museum of Art done by the efforts of Chopra himself.

By reaching the peak of this period, we try to draw attention to the significant exhibition. ‘The All India Printmakers’ put up a show in the middle of 1969. Notable in these printmakers were Jeram Patel, Jyoti Bhatt, K.G. Subramanian, Devayani Krishna, Paneer Selvam, Zarina\(^2\) and Priya Mukerjee. The inspiration ranged from geometric planes to subconscious fragments or figments. Zarina developed in some such vein; pursuing her rationality with single-mindedness and tidy ornamental disposition reflecting her inner intention, similarly as she did the hard-edged contemporary sensibility in her woodcuts. Bimal Banerjee too, has been with a fresh show proving that he had learnt a lot during his New York stay and giving his work a fevered lively line.\(^5\) Paneer Selvam’s etchings showed that he knew his trade, as in his ‘Seal of Birth,’ ‘Unknowable,’ ‘Curvilinear’ and ‘Graphic-6,’ 1969.
When the decade of the 1970 just started, the ‘Graphics 70’ show took its place in Rabindra Bhavan, to show the prints of 43 printmakers. The copious inclusion of Krishna Reddy put all the rest in the shade. Keshav Malik, remembering this significant exhibition, writes, “Repetitive or not, his work was loaded with the aura of lyricality; as if catching in split seconds the spilling bottles of fresh milk; the static life content becoming unbounded, alive, brisk and pulsating, the bland whites absorbing the pigments of what they fell on, a becoming - not a being; not frozen intellectual objects but the process of energy constantly changing and transforming. In contrast, the myriad manners of the others were like stills, not a moving film.” However, the new generation of printmakers were the products of the new education, individual adventures in a laissez faire world, who had to seek and hold their public by personal charm or arrogance, had to try to instruct, or entertain, or shock or mystify in their works. As a result their attitudes to art, were not dissimilar to those of the European Art.

Going further with the West and their role in promoting the art of print in India, Ananda Das Gupta has drawn attention to this significant event; “June 1970 was a landmark in the history of printmaking in this country; for it was in this year that the first printmaking workshop was organized in Delhi. This was under the aegis of the American Information Centre, with Paul Lingren as the guide. In this workshop more than 100 printmakers from all over the country participated and could exchange both technical know how and experience. The participants were greatly benefited with this camp, particularly the young printmakers.” - some little additions here - transportation and lodging were paid for artists, and most received a generous per diem in addition to meals. It was a huge success bringing that great number of artists to New Delhi to learn intaglio techniques. The result of Lingren’s teaching efforts were seen in the show by 103 Indian artists or novices. Among the participants, there were names such as, Dalip Bakshi, M.K. Puri, Lena Biswas, Anupam Sud, Gopi Gajwani, Shobha Broota, Dev Raj and Jai Krishna; they all have profited greatly. Jai Zharotia, Paul Koli, Himmat Shah, Amina Kar and Zarina, began to experiment more furiously. Laxma Goud’s dark-minded prints were the most striking.

Paul Lingren’s graphic workshop created lot of history in the graphic art circles in India. Both Laxman Pai and Krishan Khanna presented a mixture as they often did before,
though Khanna’s was one of the very mediocre works on display, the others within a
mention were Nasreen Mohammadi, Jagmohan Chopra and Prashant Vichitra. In contrast
the South Indian section, which was separately put up, was striking. Varadarajan Munoli,
Devraj, Menon, Arnawaz Driver and Bhaskaran had all good graphics to show though
Varadarajan and Arnawaz made better impact.

However, Lingren held an exhibition for all artists, who participated in this
workshop, at the American Cultural Centre, New Delhi. A most satisfying show; artists
from different parts of India - Gulam Mohammed Shaikh, Jyoti Bhatt and Bhupen
Khakhar from Baroda, are some of the outstanding artists, who proved that they had a
natural flair for printmaking medium. We can rightly say that, Lingren has had a great
command over his medium, but one wondered whether that was sufficient for an artist,
and as an instructor, for he appeared to have command over distinct techniques without
integrating the same in an individual personality. However, this man was one of the grand
old men of printmaking.

“In 1971, Triveni Kala Sangam’s graphics were put up for show, Kanwal Krishna
and Rano Habib showing much progress. This exhibition showed that the younger artists
were catching up fast, learning their trade. And that included an already quick-witted
Anupam Sud, never going wrong, not merely formally correct, never boring as sometimes
in painting. And, with figuration, her work climbed steeply. On the obverse, Paramjeet
Singh’s serigraphs had yet to digest the ‘foreignness,’ not yet having adapted to native
conditions. Devraj and Jatin Das, in their 1971 show, were suave and delectable. But the
best of course, once again, was Somnath Hore’s ‘Wounds,’ like some bleeding plaster of
Paris. This work of no shades was to grow still further in coming years. Wala Kishore,
following his individual line, did, as ever before, conspicuous and idiosyncratic work.”

In 1974, the first L.K.A studios were established in New Delhi. They were creation
of Sankho Chaudhury. Additional regional academies were inaugurated in Madras, 1978,
Lucknow, 1983, Calcutta, 1984, and another was scheduled to open in Bhubaneshwar in
1986. All of them have well equipped printmaking facilities and are available to any artist
who applies and is accepted to work there. Around the mid-70s onwards, we can see the
Indian printmakers practicing almost all over the country. In fact, L.K.A. studios at Garhi
in Delhi spread the technical know-how of printmaking. The Garhi studio organized
workshops for printmaking to give an opportunity to young artists from distant centres like Assam to come and learn the techniques of printmaking. In addition some of eminent artists also came to participate or to practice their artwork in these well-equipped studios.

This renaissance phase 1970-1985 is also characterized by some outstanding events. Many of Indian printmakers start to participate in the International Biennales all over the world, as well as graphic camps and workshops in India and abroad. Many printmakers went abroad to acquire the know-how of modern and advanced printmaking techniques, by being recipients of some of the many foreign government scholarships. Significant among them are Paris Atelier 17, Ecole des Beaux Arts-Paris, Rockefeller Fellowship and Pratt Graphic Centre-New York and Slade School of Art-London. Many experts of printmaking processes came to India to hold camps for graphic art in all significant cities of the country, these experts were, the professors Paul Lingren, Carol Summers and Charles Stroh. Many Indian group exhibitions were sent abroad and Indian printmakers started to gain international awards. National galleries for modern arts in Delhi and other regions, as well as private galleries began to play dominant role in this field, as significant art publications emerged, such as LKA publications, National Gallery of Modern Art publications, Art Heritage publications and Arts and Ideas Journal and those catalogues for printmaking exhibitions. The most remarkable in this process are the following.

‘The Graphic Art in India since 1850’ - a profusely illustrated all India printmakers’ catalogue with about 230 pages (some of which in colour), published under the supervision of LKA. Of similar quality is the Jehangir Art Gallery’s exhibition catalogue ‘Indian Print Making Today-1985.’ This exhibition was held in Bombay and its catalogue contained 115 pages featuring illustrations of superb quality. A large number of printmakers have been represented with analytic studies on their works and even including valuable views of the printmakers. In addition, there is a retrospective section for the old masters and more importantly, there is a wonderful research counseling the survey of Indian printmaking from the middle of the 18th century, written by Ananda Das Gupta. Significant articles are included in LKA’s catalogue ‘Graphic Art in India since 1850.’ There is a historical section by Amit Mukhopadhyay and Nirmalendu Das, Contemporary Graphics in India, written by Jaya Appasamy, Ratan Parimoo, S.A. Krishnan, Keshav
Malik, Pranabranjan Roy, A.S. Raman and Josef James. These two full-fledged catalogues are the best done about contemporary Indian printmaking and of great significance as a historical reference and of much help to any researcher.

The decade 1986-1996 and onwards, required different style of approach due to the immense change in the global system of communication and the starting of the computer age. So this is another story which may be revealed through the coming sections of this research, when we come to cite the innovative printmakers and try to go through their up-to-date and recent creations, their points of view, their intentions, as well as their individual characteristics. I think it did not take long for the younger printmakers to come to the scene with their advanced techniques and their powerful personal individuality.

This brief survey of some significant activities in the recent years, has been stated to enable us to write further about the renaissance of contemporary Indian printmaking in the Indian capital of printmaking, 'Delhi,' and also to give a beam of light on our trail towards other aspects. One can say, if the great variety and complexity of the Western printmakers is still to be achieved, the Indians may not be far from the stage because the Globe now is just only a big pavilion.

FOUNDEES OF DELHI PRINTMAKING

It is amazing to know that some prominent painters are also doing successful prints. Though we can not say they are printmakers, yet we should take into our consideration their significant role in contemporary Indian printmaking. There is no need to mention names because they are many. However, some Indian painters have the quality of graphics even in their drawings or paintings. On the contrary some graphic artists come to achieve painterly quality through their prints. Interestingly they are proud to do so, but I think this attitude is not healthy because it may reduce the powerful quality of the print, giving it unsuitable outlook that will push it away to a neutral position, neither acceptable as a print nor as a painting. Printmaking has its own inherent quality and it is pure graphic characteristics and nothing else that counts.

In the following pages we will try to reveal the significant and the special characteristics of some particular artists who may be considered as the founders of printmaking in Delhi, such as Kanwal Krishna and Devayani Krishna, Jagmohan Chopra.
KANWAL KRISHNA, 1910-1993
The Doyen of Delhi Printmaking

Kanwal Krishna was one of the leading members of the Delhi Silpi Chakra that we already cited earlier. Both Kanwal and his wife Devayani were actively involved in the field of graphic art and with group efforts they helped to establish one of the pioneering graphic studios with good equipped facilities and a library of art books. This pioneering graphic studio was established in the ‘Modern School,’ Delhi, under the supervision of Kanwal Krishna, who is considered as one of the foremost graphic Indian artists. He had worked at the graphic press even before he went to Paris to Hayter’s Atelier 17 in 1954. He was engrossed with the immense possibilities of the monoprint technique to start with. On returning to India he worked on hundreds of monoprints. During this period he developed a vast repertoire of technical possibilities and in 1958 when he acquired his own press he used these for brilliant effects in intaglio printing. Some of these prints are made from conventional methods of engraving, etching, and aquatint. In the main body of his work, Krishna has circumvented the tedious process of acid biting altogether. The basic principle involved in intaglio is the creation of different surfaces and textures in the plate, which can hold the printing inks.

Krishna’s innovative way of handling these processes is quite different. After a great deal of experiments, he discovered the reversed process, which gave him the required satisfaction and suited properly his inventive temperament. Knowing more about this point, we need to quote S. A. Krishnan. “He left it all behind and resorted to combination of relief and intaglio process by building demarcated relief areas with a whole range of different materials, including collage and adhesives to build up different levels. With this and the employment of rollers of varying hardness, Kanwal was able to achieve results which combined the best of both the conventional and his own innovated methods. Whatever limitations his method may have imposed, it produced results which satisfied his restless searching mind.”

Krishna’s graphics, with their iridescent light effects achieved by his complex technical process and compelling references to the spiritual or effulgent light, and other
mysterious realms, or the result of intense concentration on a meditative level and in effect abstract visions of a kind of personal awareness. However, the method of raising the surface used by this artist is paper collage. Krishna builds up his composition by pasting strips of paper on hardboard. He then follows the conventional process of printing; but he achieves highly individual effects such as a transparent overlapping of form. Another of building surface is by the use of synthetic plastics, resins, etc., which can be applied to the hardboard by direct brush applications in much the same way as one draws and paints. Here he achieves this sense of immediacy, which he needs for some of his themes. As an experimental innovator, Krishna achieved amazing prints.

Krishna has been a seeker in a way few people, even for that matter, artists, have the courage, the single-mindedness and the energy to seek. This search has led him on journeys into remote areas of the Himalayas and Europe. Geeta Kapur points out the significance of these travels and their deep influence. "The impulse for these travels springs from the inner most recesses of a mind which is continually reaching out to know the unknown, to experience fresh alternatives. An awareness of the subterranean passages of the mind, the experience of being in love with nature; all these have evoked in him mystic contemplation. Indeed his art is a highly expressive pictorial expression of such contemplation. His images are elusive and enduring at the same time. They hover restlessly on the picture surface and yet possess assuredness. Having taken birth as pictorial entities they seem to exist in their own right."2

Looking at his earlier prints depicting the Himalayan landscapes, they were not mere mountains, but the essence of the divine. However, by the mid-50s, he was coming closer to abstraction, when he did his 'Monastery' 1959.4 Meanwhile, he vigorously took to abstract delineation. For instance, he depicted the theme of Tibetan icons, such as 'Lama Milarepa'5 as a slim seated figure with his right hand near his ear, listening to eternal silence. Krishna used here that mysterious green with hints of lovely rust - all pulsating with a texture almost tactile. Ananda Das Gupta once said that nothing like 'Lama Milarepa' happened before. It was the first breakthrough in the printmaking scene.

Though Krishna's themes derived from Nature, yet it belongs to the realm of abstraction and they find expression in abstract form and space. In taking visual shape they extend the dimension of our conscious awareness. These activities yielded its fruitful
results in the early sixties when Krishna was concerned with portraying the themes of the quantum of energy that changes its form but remains constant. Thus, the meandering lines create a kind of collage of the subtlest lines in which these rhythmic values appears to be an emanation, a kind of nervous circuit, which graphically registers the whole movement. In the latter, where the colour scheme is more vivid, the arrangement is in the form of a montage of colour, as Krishna had already begun to experiment with different materials to acquire textured surfaces, while the edges are no longer sharp and the stark abstract quality of his earlier prints had begun to be replaced by slight overlaps in colour, suggesting a shimmering glow reminiscent of his earlier watercolours.

Significant among his prints, reverse process are, 'Gay Scorpions' 1962, 'Conflict' 1963, 'Hovering Spirit' 1964, 'Floating Forms' 1972 and 'Mountain Meditation' 1984. All these intaglio prints are of immense value to all those, who are working in the field of printmaking, due to their high technical quality and advanced compositions supported by revolutionary attitude that will influence the printmaking scene for a long time. He was, however, seeking more effective methods and expressive process deep enough to suggest a mystic feeling. Krishna was deeply impressed by the abstract scenes of pilgrimage in their passage through mountains. Their mobility and permanent presence are of great power of inspiration for Krishna, especially, in his earlier etchings and engravings, as well as the later prints. His prints are characterized by the original qualities of the high understanding of abstract expression controlled by his individual and innovative processes to explore a new horizon beyond his beloved mountains. He was eager to see that divine light spreads with eternal love and ultimate intimacy to capture the deep core of our insight and to captivate our sight as well.

Krishna's prints remain always fresh and his impressions elicit pleasure to the eyes of the coming generations, perpetually acquiring the artistic impact and the striking effectiveness. Though his compositions are fully abstract, yet his figures are full of meaningful delineations and suggestive indications, amenable to the eyes of the onlooker, giving him tender whispers and offering him emotional richness in colours, as we see in his intaglio 'Floating Forms' of 1972 and 'Mountain Meditation' 1984. The above mentioned qualities are the permanent individual qualities of the artist himself. Krishna, in
fact, is the major forerunner of the contemporary renaissance of printmaking in Delhi and also the senior guru of its printmakers.

His professional career as a teacher of fine arts, especially graphic in the famous 'Modern School'-Delhi and his achievements in this school awarded him an international acclaim. Krishna is the first Indian artist to design completely local hand-made graphic machine. Thus, he opened the door to the younger generation to acquire the attitude of independently manufacturing art equipment and materials, projecting the expertise of Indians in this field in the days to come. Indian artists, in their past, present and future are the forerunners in such fields. It is perfectly true that this generous eminent printmaker faithfully did all his best to offer his deep acquaintance of the printmaking know-how to his colleagues as well as to those printmakers resident in Delhi and nicely treated them. Tenderness is one of his innate qualities combined with profound love towards man and nature. However, we can say, Krishna was an innovative printmaker and a prolific renaissance builder of contemporary printmaking in Delhi.

DEVAYANI KRISHNA
The Earliest Mistress of Innovative Printmaking

Devayani Krishna is an excellent printmaker in her own right; in the early days of her career, she did some interesting paintings such as 'The Third Story,' 1945.¹ Later on, she strongly took to intaglio prints and perfectly grasped the proper technical processes of graphic art. Meanwhile, she acquired her own individual approach to the realm of printmaking. Her early prints like 'Mask' 1960,² 'Beethoven Going Blind' 1960,³ 'Bird's Nest' 1961, 'Zoo' 1962⁴ and 'Affection' 1963⁵ are very successful. We can say that these five prints are the best, of her first phase during the decade of the 60's. However, Devayani, in the above-mentioned prints, has had different types of styles; she did not yet found her ground. In some of these prints, she went the same lines of those of her husband Kanwal; some are not so exciting. But, in fact, her imagery had been her own; drawn from folk and ritual art, fine as these early things were. It was only when she came to make the series on the 'Cactus' and that on the 'Lovers' in the late 60s, Devayani at that time, was eagerly searching for something different and more worthwhile; generally speaking, it was a period of experimental process.
In the early 70s, due to her great efforts, Devayani discovered her new striking theme entitled ‘Allah Series.’ In these intaglio relief prints, she highlighted the basic calligraphic beauty of the Arabic characters by cutting deep into the surface to release the glimmering, radiant areas of free forms that rose from the generally heavy and mystifying coloured background. Devayani has keen interest in drawing. Her strange and exciting drawings depict masses that are in a process of disintegration and also appear to be trying to cling together as though attracted by a force. Perhaps the best illustration in visual terms would be the image of a sunburst from behind the dark monsoon clouds. There could be total poetic perspective since her prints look like the divine laws struck out with lightening force come to the prophet ‘Moses’ on the mountain, so the name of ‘Allah’ bears mystic background for Devayani. Most of her works of this period are titled with this name. The arabesque lettering presenting the beautiful form of the God’s name occurs in most of them.

But, when Devayani comes to repeat these enjoyable delineations and depictions through such themes, her series gradually comes to suffer critical problems such as the naïve attitude and outlook, but, therein no real spontaneous feelings. Her series come to decline step by step. In order to avoid these drawbacks, Devayani went on to complete the whole series in the same vein, but in different ways of delineation, enriched by some mysterious combinations of lines, Arabic-like calligraphy and some other decorative embellishments. We should readily acknowledge her prints as progressive steps of innovation. She is, in true spirit, the forerunner. Devayani never followed the footprints of others; her prints are even quite different from those abstract prints of her husband Kanwal. One can observe that her subsequent series ‘Why and What,’ carried forward the same concept with high intaglio motifs of the interrogation or exclamation mark symbolic of questioning and wonder, lacking the place of the arabesque motifs. Generally speaking, her prints in this period of the early 70s are like energy bursting out of the inner soul. There are also deep expressions intensely encapsulated in the images of such calligraphs that emerged from the dark interior of a womb.

Since time immemorial, the Himalayas had drawn pilgrims, rishis and saints into communion with nature, which was a form of religious experience at its purest and most profound sense. These regions were the cultural repositories of Buddhism. Devayani
responded with the same degree of verve to the esoteric mysteries and masked dances of the Tibetan lamas as she did to the snowbound slopes during her travels with her husband to these places. She had always been interested in primitive and folk-arts and the ritualistic complexity that creates hypnotic power touched her deeply. On the other hand, she did some powerful Red Cross 'Under the Roof of God.' Devayani, by the mid-70s, has acquired the authenticity of primitive Christianity, before its adoption by Imperial Rome, deeply impressed by these themes as a divine source. Incising her depictions by deeply etched lines, strangely enough these emphasizing lines are simply executed as if someone of a fervent faith, someone humble may be a fisherman. These works with its religious tinge showed the road she was to adopt later. Though her lines were untrained, yet they were full of faith. The serious intent of the artist was palpable as in her 'Namaste' and also in her other works of this period, which extended till the late 70s, when she turned to underwater series. Here, we see her patterns, whorls of shells, segment of prismatic light, etc. They stir the mind to some extent without setting in a fire such as their cosmic, quite palpable of prayer against evil, and for light that is, the depth of the artist and her sense of devotion. Significant in her prints in the late 80s is 'Underwater-9.'

Devayani has her individual characteristic qualities that project keenly through her prints. She always has that kind of tender approach to her materials. It will be an amazing experience looking at her hands treating, adjusting, spreading, wiping or adding her printing. You feel that she was doing her prints with the whole of her body and her entire senses and feelings. Thus, the rendering of her colours, lines, forms and other elements sharing her the intimate love, she is flattering her medium, giving it a cheerful and intimate atmosphere to make it easy for her to glean the best qualities in order to achieve some sort of striking imageries. In fact, Devayani has acquired the masterly power over her medium. Though she is not an expert printmaker, she approaches the difficulties of this realm by her wit, sensitive personality, and intellectual understanding. Her materials yield her the opportunity to do whatever she demands. I think this is the secret of her successful prints. However, this is her feminine way to achieve all about her exciting career. Hand in hand, Devayani shares with her husband Kanval, an abiding sensitivity for the spiritual and a sense of the unfathomable mystery at the heart of things. It is this persistent but intangible awareness that seeks to express in her unending works, in her
wonderful series that we already cited. In fact, Devayani is one of the major builders of printmaking in Delhi.

JAGMOHAN CHOPRA

The Architect of Delhi Printmaking

Chopra has keenly taken interest in the innovative processes of Somnath, watching him practicing his unconventional technical treatment of paper block or mount board plates, engraving the relief, building with additives — somewhat like Kanwal Krishna — such as resins, polymers, Araldite, etc. The role of Somnath in Delhi’s printmaking activities was not significant. He was not happy with his work in Delhi; so he was eager to return back to his original roots in Bengal. When the chance at last came in the year 1967, he quickly said good bye to his colleagues and turned his back to Delhi for good, seeking his homeland destination. But, before he quitted, Somnath was eager to shape a small group of intelligent, sensitive and talented students, viz., Paneer Selvam, Usha Pasricha, Jai Krishna, Laxmi Dutt and Umesh Varma, etc. These are the kind of printmakers whom any teacher and school would be proud of.

Chopra took over keeping the best of the old traditions, but infusing enthusiasm for creativity, self-expression and the sense of great earnestness in working. Etching is his forte. His prints have a linear quality with varied textural effects and subtle tonal gradations. The assurance he has shown in this medium should have led him to a personal style of some distinction and larger significance.*1 But he failed to bring attractive outlook to his prints, so his compositions were not interesting. In fact, they are sometimes boring or even dull. Chopra has learnt to eschew the accidental and unwary effect and has taken at this time of the early seventies to specific formal compositions different from his sensitive, rather temperamental work of the earlier years. Chopra achieves vaster and varied range of relief and intaglio surface than is perhaps possible by the time-honoured metal and acid bite. The result often incorporates the qualities of both painting and graphics. He achieves astonishing results by studying the particular qualities of the additive ground and manipulating the incisional possibilities of the surface.*2

Chopra’s process relies on some sophisticated treatments that enable him to dispense with the use of the acid on zinc plate. His method of work follows very closely
the steps of the usual intaglio process and can combine the directness of engraving with
the range of textured possibilities available in soft ground etching and aquatint. Geeta
Kapur has an interesting comment: "The zinc plate is substituted by mat board on which
he spreads a layer of liquid plastic that serves the purpose of ‘soft ground.’ The design is
incised on the plastic and the drying time of the plastic is taken note of, the quality of the
line differs at each stage. When the plastic is completely liquid there is a burr at the edges,
where the drying plastic has been pushed and the line becomes furrowed. In order to get
an area of rich black there is an exact substitution of the aquatint process,** carborandum
powder is sprinkled on a previously applied coating of synthetic adhesive to which the
powder sticks." Furthermore, describing this process, we can add the following. The
grains of the powder hold the ink and produce solid patches in print. Similarly for
introducing extraneous texture any material can be placed on the wet plastic and it will
then register its imprint. The mat board is inked in the usual manner and stencils are used
for the application of several colours.

His methods depend on both economy and speed in working. Chopra succeeded to
use his material to create new fresh impressions. He adjusted the output of zinc plate
etching and aquatint to acquire different print surface, few of them are successful and
interesting. Owing to the processes which combine together serving his up-to-date
imagery and suggesting strange new realms, or going deeper to reflect the quality of
underwater life, or he moves to the thick foliage or involve with the interwoven complex
patterns of coral rocks and weeds, pinks or pale gold, suddenly burst into areas of warm
red or emerald green. "The colours have a subtlety that is unexpectedly broken by vivid
revelation. There are other prints, which have a presence as of old frescoes or manuscripts.
There is a suggestion of weathered decay, of fossilized images retained here and the sharp
inscriptions there, reminiscent of Egyptian hieroglyphs.* Chopra’s expression does not
rely on bold innovation of form or as an overpowering image, but on an intricate
composition of small activated forms masked out at the edges. This tends to become an
arbitrary device to focus attention on a design which may otherwise seem disposed and

In spite of all these odds, when we look at the whole artworks, we discover that his
sensibility that relies mainly on line and texture is highly appropriate for the graphic
technique. But in fact, we feel that his prints are ‘difficult’ essays in intaglio – a matter of expressing particular gestalt imagery. This gestalt refers to the pristine age of glaciers. Let us put it in some other way. Chopra did his best to create a world of Braille; like textures of incised and embossed surfaces that suggest early primeval life, where plumed serpents, feathered and webbed depictions that stir our imagination.

But what about the other sides of Chopra’s personality? We come to know that once he started to travel extensively as a teacher, who accompanied students on cultural tours, observing landscape, geography, architecture, and sculptural friezes, cave interiors. The experience of India, both fleeting and intensive, the sea in the South, the Himalayas in the North, these formed Chopra’s visual experience. As a photographer, he recorded these experiences dutifully and with great pleasure and enthusiasm. We may observe that all these complicated items formed the printmaking career of Chopra and also revealed his intellectual attitude in the field of Art Education. His advanced processes and his practical methods of teaching enhanced by a respectable personality. His themes have their distinct advantage that suits his temperament and image concepts.

Chopra has not done much innovative work and yet whatever he conveys speaks eloquently and lavishly. Looking to his beautiful way of colouring, his burning tints mixed with dark values of rich colours enhanced by imageries of diffuse discordant forms. The artist often achieves a just balance in his compositions; pleasure here is discreet, and it caters to the refined eye alone. The prints of Chopra are often abstract. One needs carefully cultivated powers from oneself to appreciate this special treatment of the medium almost like savouring the miniature or similar to the final result often we acquired from the old medium, except that concrete power of unity, apparent as one view, and acquiring the high quality of printmaking.4

When Chopra started seriously to make prints he did not own a press of his own but worked in the college. Like most serious printmakers in India, his production has not been great, partly because of his organizational responsibilities as the leader of ‘Group 8’. As secretary – and later chairman – of the Delhi Silpi Chakra, he had in fact, little time for his own work after the hours devoted to the college. But, in spite of all these odds, nothing can hinder him from his graphic career. Chopra’s graphic prints have been shown in such international exhibitions of art as the Bienal De Sao Paulo, the Tokyo International and

166
the ‘Lugano’ world exhibition, where he won the top award. Chopra has served, encouraged and helped much the younger generation of printmakers in many different fields. He also played a significant role as a renaissance figure and as a forerunner-builder of printmaking in Delhi. Still he acts as one of the most important figures in this field.

JAI ZHAROTIA

The Innocence of Vision

Here is an interesting statement by P.N. Mago, which may be the adequate way to approach Jai Zharotia as a man as well as an artist “I remember Jai Zharotia as a student in my class in 1970-71, a slender young man, sensitive and quiet, with a serene expression, simply dressed, uncommunicative, inscrutable, unapproachable, without sign of show or aggressiveness, and conspicuously self-contained. Only the eyes were in contrast to his reserved nature: they were the calmly observant eyes of an alert and talented individual, who was to become a colleague in the Department of Fine Arts, which I then headed, at the College of Arts, Delhi, and a fellow artist in his own right.”

It was in 1970, when Paul Lingren, the American printmaking expert had seen Zharotia’s first print show in Delhi and invited him to attend U.S.I.S. printmaking workshop. Between 1970-1977, Zharotia achieved very good progressive steps, he held three exhibitions in Delhi and started to do some lecture demonstrations and graphic show in New Delhi as well as in Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi. Around the end of 1977, he did quite significant show of his prints in Delhi. J. Swaminathan commented on that exhibition: “The immediate impact on the beholder of these prints is that of colour. Zharotia uses the gay colours of the costumes of his native Rajasthani people with abandon as well as control. These colours reinforce his imagic fantasia to produce works of great beauty and lyricism. Yellows, mauves, greens and reds spread out in transparent draperies, veiling and unveiling forms that are both generic and totemic. The silent rhythm, the measured dance, fairy tale drama, is set up, only to be congealed again in the splendour of the magical movement, the movement of expectancy.”

Jai Zharotia’s vision may be termed as one of free, unbridled fantasy. Yet it enables him to pierce through the cultural superstructure - a structure increasingly made up of theoretical activity in truth, a vision such as Jai’s refuses to ignore the contingent fact at the very heart of an outwardly well-armoured intellect. “A loosening of the top soil
is what his genre achieves. He lets logic die in order that the secret corners of the psyche come back to life." This phrase is by Keshav Malik, who in the same breath says: "Evidently, Jai Zharotia primarily aims at that aesthetic enjoyment, which comes of the culturally uninhibited senses. There is no other meaning or purpose, however high, than to give the inner man breathing space... it is a vast pictorial space, which Zharotia creates, in a comparatively tiny format. While each of his images is small, and invariably interesting, all around it is the illusion of an enormous open horizon, quite like the night sky over some southern desert. Addedly, being the sort of space erected by the eye of the imagination, it is free of physical gravity. Within it you could float or fly at will, jump over the moon, and much else besides. Clearly, here is a realm that attempts the fabulous."³

Let us approach some selected aspects of Zharotia's projections, to do so; I think, it is worthwhile to go through the interpretative statement. Zharotia explored the human relationships using the figure of a clown as metaphor for all human beings. The elaborate games that people play with each other, concealing their livelihood depends upon it. His clowns appear wistful, yearning with eagerness, the lonely little men who sublimate themselves by their dedication and industry.¹ Solemn and rigid they appear as if petrified by the passage of time. However, we can see each of Zharotia’s paintings or printmaking is linked to the varying moods of the artist and they show up in the melancholy blues and purples, or the light hearted fuchsia² and rose tints or the passionate touches of glowing reds and vibrant yellows in certain places: "Many of our graphic artists, are concerned with the question of purity of the medium. Many hide their poverty of thought and vision by raising the medium itself to Godhead. Jai does not belong to these ritualists. Yet he perhaps succeeds in creating that magic which becomes ritual in the hands of those who lack imagination."⁵ Says J. Swaminathan.

In fact, Jai’s style and form are secondary to his primary need to communicate, or even merely realize which has moved him. It is for this reason that his manner is inimitable. His style has grown out of the necessity of mood and imaginative content. This content is highly subjective and personal, countless new forms will emerge. To know more about this point, let us move to cope with Zharotia’s point of view “I have a firm belief that a mystery cannot be solved. Whenever I tried to solve it, I became part of it: I
became stranger to myself. I witnessed a happening. Projection of this happening is my art. Images come and go as I breathe. These images are not bound by physical world; they are free to move wherever they desire; they dance up and down, here and there, dissolve into each other and sometimes even disappear. The eternal movement of comic world creates mysteries and riddles, which always baffle and haunt me.\textsuperscript{4}

When we carefully examine the work of Zharotia, we come to find out that in this world of changing perceptions, he is a kind of artist, who is not satisfied with mere representations and has extended his search into many realms, the most significant of these venture into the unexplored has centered upon ancient cultures, in an attempt to fathom the mystery of mankind's origins. The surface simplicity of these arts that belies their emotive power, serves him as a source of inspiration. In fact, "Zharotia moulds the origins of the mankind's archaic formal qualities and their intensity of expression to suit his needs to chronicle his journey from childhood to adulthood. He puts forth a concept of universal reality which surmounts the divide between the visible and invisible, the acceptable and the unacceptable and between innocence and experience."\textsuperscript{10}

Zharotia is fully involved in his creations, we can freely say that he considers himself as a part of his art, any image he conceives and recreates is a reflection of himself, as if he were a tree or a floating arrow. Zharotia confesses that he is completely in love with his own self. "I am so possessive of this self of mine that I kept it with me intact even during my days of poverty and struggle." He believes in the intrinsic unity of cosmic phenomena and that everything comes out from 'One' and returns into the 'One' and that 'One' is All — in fact, this is an instinctive impulse and also an inborn conviction in all the human beings. To feel only one god — or whatever one - all created by him and all return to him, is the core of the 'Oneness' belief. Let us refer to him. "I may be depicting animals, a paper boat, a book, a mountain or a tree, but I will be projecting the same thing." In fact, it is amazing to know about these aspects to reveal some of these intangible, innocent, yet intricate artworks. Getting closer to him, I hear him whisper these few words: "Sometimes I stand near the window. I get involved in the visual mystery pervasive in the space. Suddenly I am a stranger to myself."\textsuperscript{10} Here, we should get closer to specific creations of Zharotia in order to augment our interpretation and understanding of his innovative way of expression.
Zharotia amazingly used the mixed media delineations in attractive way, but, his main forte is the screen print depictions. However, his series ‘Lukman Ali’ may unravel some of his individual aspects. One of these wonderful mixed media of 1982 entitled ‘Lukman Ali-9.’ is a striking portrait - bold, impressive, mysterious and controversial; we may not find such quality of portrait in the work of his contemporaries. Later on, Zharotia did another portrait entitled ‘Image’ 1993, wherein he used ink and brush drawing on paper. It is also a bold and striking artwork. One can observe that Zharotia, in a decisive act of rebellion against generally accepted modes of expression, strove to create an intimate language of his own, with symbols and metaphors, to communicate his innermost thoughts and feelings. In the jungles of urban culture, poets and dreamers like Zharotia create fantasy-filled, mystic landscapes of the mind, passionate, yet tender, free from all preconceived notions of realistic depiction. As though equipped with an X-ray vision, like a child that paints what he knows rather than what he sees, he dispenses with all artificial barriers of walls and clothing, giving life to the entrapped forms. His vision of the world is then expressed through the interplay of these forms, their colour and emotional bearing.

Let us approach Zharotia’s depictions tending to be a playful blend of realm, fantasy and mysticism that imparts his paintings a dreamy, but piercing representation of past, present or even eternal. By strong alchemy, he has been able to transcend the ordinary, mundane and create his own metaphors and equations, due to which a man, a monkey or a paper boat may be equal in importance. Thus, in Zharotia, the flowers, trees, temples, animals and men, assume strangely significant relationships. It is not an eccentric vision or alienated sensibility or caprice that rules the world Zharotia creates. The viewer, as a result, is astonished at the inseparability of impulse and order, play and purpose, real and ideal, in all that he creates. “Despite extension from one plane of existence to another, from one medium to another, the forms and symbols remain the same. The varied and manifold experience, which he has lived through his drawings, watercolours and printmaking, are lived through again in his ceramics, perhaps more vividly, and more solidly, yet, the illusions created are different. The sense of flow, of unrest, the defiance of gravity, the soaring movement as reflected in the drawings, changes here to calm and restfulness. The simplification and exaggeration of forms remain, but the mood of
playfulness is cancelled by sobriety. Zharotia reclining goats, relaxed bulls, supine kings and resting love-birds exude acceptance and adjustment."²

In fact, Zharotia loves to sketch bulls in different positions. He used the powerful gesture of the bull and its poised symbol of sexual invading. In other words, he used the bold outlook of the bull combined with its instinctive-innate impulse to create his erotic themes or something related to such themes. I think it is worthwhile to refer to his powerful brush and ink sketch ‘Bull I’ 1984⁴ and his silkscreen ‘Mystery I’ acrylic, 1984."⁴ When we carefully examine such depictions, we find some particular qualities come to be visualized² and help us to perceive some other aspects that concern his individual way of image making, especially his powerful drawings and wonderful colours. Normally Zharotia uses simple colour inks. He tries to create dark tones and overlapping values. In the process, very special texture and effects come forth. Normally he starts his work with a small unit and then adds other units one by one. He uses colour, but with artistic instinct and not in conspiratorial manner. The process is always an important factor. In fact, Zharotia has developed a lively approach, experimenting in a variety of techniques, media and styles. His bold design concepts with their free network of lines show a sureness of touch. Through a grotesque style, he has achieved what he has been after for quite some time: a stylistic maturity. For instance, his technique of using watercolours is unusual, the colours are muffled and the drawing is delicate, serving his style and expressive purpose. The subtle slashing of brush strokes and soluble coloured pencil run along side the contour of a form suggesting its shadow. An adequate example that reveals almost all these technical qualities is his gouache painting ‘Magician’ 1990 and ‘Untitled I’ of the same year."²

Zharotia has occasionally worked on a larger scale, but his most successful pictures are small, intimate and unpretentious. There is a greater wealth of artistic content and expression in his tiny sketches than in his large sized works. His vision instinctively converges on to a small area, enriching it with formalistic charm and amazing minuteness of detail, we need, however, to return back to his early works of the seventies to retrace some of his original and basic formulated projections. P.N. Mago will help us: “In the early seventies he created mysterious headless figures that dissolved into wraith-like configurations soaring into space, or elongated apparitions kicking at the moon, and bulls
jumping into the firmament. In the mid-eighties, these changed into more lyrical images of females in conversation with flowers, and human and animal forms merging into one another. These were followed by a whole series of drawings and paintings of acrobats. Then emerge circus horses - around the late eighties - with female riders and rather erotic images of centaurs.5

Zharotia's earlier mannerisms have however given way to a more natural style with a new delicacy of drawing and sentiment. The bizarre and mysterious works bear the stamp of his personality and female figures, whether in their morphic or anthropomorphic versions are always seductive. It should be relevant here to refer to his black and white with grey background silkscreen print 'The Provoked Horse' 1993.6 Let us be with Zharotia again, "My images are created in the realm of mind where it is said, forms, countless and innumerable, are continuously fashioned and chiselled. My drawings are reflection of this activity of the innermost being and they achieve their own artistic and expressive significance. I have my own dreams and passions. And when I am possessed by them, it seems as if they are released spontaneously through my pen or brush, on paper or canvas, with a surprising formalistic diversity. But, then, it is perhaps an interpretation of the unknown and its relationship to our tangible sensory world, which I feel is under a constant metamorphosis in the mind of the artist."7 His screen print 'The Provoked Horse' 19936 is the proper example that may reveal some of Zharotia's methods of image-making - firstly as an expression and secondly as an individual technique, which are hardly within the reach of some other artists who are also mastering the screenprint process. In this print, Zharotia reveals some of his erotic motivation.

In fact, Zharotia is more a printmaker than a painter or a ceramic maker. I have seen him first time in Delhi Arts College heading the section of silkscreen in the year 1993. Zharotia loves to work with silkscreen techniques; he feels this medium is most appropriate for presenting his image with simplicity of shape and the flow of colour. The colours reinforce the magical quality that pervades his visual mysticism. Zharotia's prints are different from the other artists. In their prints the abstract concept of time, space forms are arrived at not through nature signs and symbols or tend to portray the fantasy themes by a purely pictorial element of line texture, shape, colour. In his print and other depictions, we also see the dynamic juxtaposition of coloured space enhanced by lines and
textural details creating an exciting and intriguing picture place. Let us here refer to his colour silkscreen ‘Mystery I’ 1984 as well as his silkscreen print ‘Mystery II’ 1985 and his interesting screenprint ‘Red Bird on the Head’ 1995.

I was lucky enough to see Zharotia during his work on silkscreen three times between 1993-1996. Here, in Baroda, there often were camps and workshops organized by the graphic department or some other societies representing art-lovers. In all these camps, he used only the silkscreen processes. His communication, while he was working, is very friendly and tender; he loves to reveal all about his technical experience and faithfully shows us some of his advanced techniques and innovative discoveries that he achieved during his long experimental projects and creations. Here, I would like to refer to his two silkscreen prints executed in Baroda, 1994. ‘The Tree Lover I’ and ‘The Tree Lover II’ Zharotia worked in silkscreen process as a sort of demonstration. We were close to him in the graphic department, while at Baroda, participating in the graphic workshop. All of us were in excited mood, enjoying looking at his amazing handling of the medium pulling 30 issues. Perfectly moving his ‘squeeze’ up and down, he quickly achieved his coloured areas. We felt that the silkscreen medium belongs to him, with perfection under his command and obedient to his demand, this is his real and matchless forte.

Let us have a close look at his ‘The Tree Lover I’ and ‘The Tree Lover II,’ which is somehow similar to the first one except the gesture of the nude figure presenting the flower to the bodiless human face. However, in the first print, we can see two of Zharotia’s expressive colours, the graceful variation of vibrant olive green mixed with black-like sap green enhancing the maximum area of the background, while in the foreground he used tender kind of lovely light green overlapped by off-white and enhanced by a magical kind of peculiar off-white colour. When moved to the legs and arms of the tree lover, we will see that they are depicted as the trunk and branches of a tree and in between there is a bearded face. All the combination of these elements, limbs, branches, heads, leaves and flowers together are delineated beautifully to create some kind of striking composition. The atmosphere is also accentuated by the fragrance of fresh white flowers blossoming amongst tiny leaves, these elements are graceful enough to project a sort of mystic beauty and silent rhythmic music, revealing the quality of tenderness and playfulness to share all about the atmosphere with this bodiless head with
its meaningfully gazing posture as if expecting to grasp the attractive flowers. There is immense feeling of lyrical movement and unity of form that reveal a well-knit composition. The viewer will definitely love both of the ‘Tree Lover’ II and I.

P.N. Mago has some further points of view concerning the silkscreen prints of Zharotia, “There is yet another facet of Zharotia’s prints, which has to do with unexpected areas of paint that accidentally appear and characterize the pictorial surface of practically all his pictures, areas that are somewhat unplanned and perhaps even appearing mysterious to him and which he seems to guard carefully. Not many artists give serious thought to such chance effects. He gradually acquired and developed these qualities, patiently and with care, to achieve that tremendous feeling of motion and colour, which signifies his intensely emotional nature.”8 We can find some examples of the above characteristics, when we carefully examine his depictions between 1984 and 1998.

Zharotia’s prints are characterized by his individual quality. He neither copies nor initiates any forms of either arts or nature. Instead, he culls various lyrical and exotic elements and integrates them into his own personal vision; he simplifies forms, eliminating all unnecessary details of anatomy. His figures have proportions that are not those of the visible world. The bodies are arranged frontally or in the ideal position, so that they appear in their most complete manner, creating a multi-faceted view.

The artworks are no doubt a document of the artist’s dreams and fantasies played out for creative satisfaction and communication to the viewer in a symphony of forms and colours. He universalizes the specific and speaks forth directly about human nature. Beneath the calm on the surface run turbulent currents and into his magical world enter predatory beasts, who link the past menacingly; animals and birds screech discordantly, while beautiful flowers bloom; just to be uprooted. Tracing further his career, we find that though affected from ancient art of the Greeks, Assyrians or Etruscans, or that of Mohenjo-daro, or of Japanese prints, Indian miniatures, indigenous folk-art or from Picasso and Klee, Zharotia brings to his works qualities of originality and innovation that are uniquely his own. He transcended beyond our horizon and tried to discover the unknown sensory world. “A region, where the moon and stars, mountains, animals, birds, trees, flowers, butterflies and paper boats metamorphose into one another and floating in unique space-time continuum, appear as characters with fantastic personalities.”9
The Lalit Kala Akademi in New Delhi established the Garhi workshops in the mid-seventies. This provided facilities to a number of artists, who could not be accommodated in personal workshops, or the workshop of the 'Group 8.' The Akademi followed this up by establishing Regional Centres at Lucknow, Madras, Calcutta and Bhubaneshwar. All these centers were also provided with Graphic workshops. Thus, the community workshop concept was finally established. These events led to an explosion of Printmaking activity, as is evident from increased submission of prints in national and other All India Exhibitions from the late sixties onwards.

Through the years, printmaking achieved constant progress. It was the year 1990, when an enthusiastic band of young printmakers at the capital's Garhi Studios formed a guild; the venture was widely dismissed as a passing phase. And this was only natural considering the dwindling interest in the art form down the years. Yet, the guild's members themselves have retained much of their old zeal in their craft. Let us listen to Jagmohan Chopra's point of view, he asserts about Indian Printmakers Guild, "This group of printmakers established their guild in 1990 at Delhi. The guild comprises mostly of artists based in Delhi. Its members have an attitude of projecting their work in an aggressive and professional manner. This is perhaps a result of the present state of affairs in India, mainly due to the rapid industrialization, and with it, the resultant mechanization of approach. The cut-throat competition in business, industry, the need to self proclaim and to aggressively advertise products, is gradually becoming the norm." In fact, Chopra was afraid of this attitude and further he conveyed his suspicions, saying; "This survival instinct, when over-emphasized tends to shift the emphasis from the finer qualities of art and art activity to end results, products and their marketing." However, he continued; "In view of the zeal and energy that this group is working with, it is bound eventually to contribute positively to the spread of Indian Printmaking."

The Guild has been holding workshops and exhibitions since its inception on August 15, 1990, showing not only the finished artworks of the members, but also the processes of taking prints in different mediums. The artists are always in active and constant progress. While their zeal keeps them alive, personal preferences and styles
distinguish the artists. Kavita Nayar’s early 90’s silk screens and lithographs are images of intimacy in the ‘entwined’ forms of human pairs rendered in delicate harmonies of colours that appeal to the eye and charm the mind. Her ‘Two’ inspired creations take one into the sensuous colourful world of romantic give-and-take. Moving to another member Kanchan Chander, her characters, mostly tribals, are among the most lively of the exhibits ‘in the woodcut technique’ and their totems emphasize the tribal’s innocence in a world gone artificial and awry. Kanchan uses vibrant colours in her woodcuts, she has bold forms and these forms are deeply reflective of the raw power of the primitive imagery dealing with the phenomena of life and the theme of the Mother Goddess. Jayant Gajera’s landscapes are unconventional. They are like explosions of forms and colour in a dramatic light effect that grips the mind.

P.N. Mago writes about some of the printmakers, who are members in the Guild, “K.R. Subbanna, in his etchings, silk-screen and lithographs, continues luxuriant metamorphic imagery. Inspired by traditional motifs, he imparts onto his images a sense of experiment and grace in line and detail with the nude female providing subtle erotic overtones. And while Moti Zharotia, in his well executed silk-screens, creates a world of fantasy in subtle colours with moon, trees and flying humans and animals in their quintessential manifestations, Shukla Sawant in her ‘hand-coloured emboss’ prints attractively combines the embossed effect with delicate tints of water colours. Some of her works show her sharp reaction to social absurdities and atrocious situations. However, Sawant’s genius too resides in her love for floral motifs that are as remarkable as those of her colleagues; in particular of K. Subbanna - in colour scheme and symmetry. Anand M. Banerji’s lithographs and woodcuts on the theme of ‘Temptation’ have unusual views of human body and its links are filled with subtle variations of line, form and colour values through superimposition, whereas Bula Bhattacharya’s etchings and lithographs present her as an emotionally sensitive and a socially conscious artist with strong feminist views. P.N. Mago points out: “Sukhvinder Singh is in the process of maturing. Though puppets are still a dominant theme of his large woodcuts, he has used motifs as metaphors and symbols of human despair. His woodcuts show sensitivity for the content as much as for the material. And Sushanta Guha, who also works in woodcut, depicts scenes that are
full of the pathos of life, rendering these in a somewhat cubistic idiom in social situations and problems."

These works, in general, are a mature artistic expression in a media of choice and are not wanting in 'originality.' Along with their recent works, there is also a sampling of their earlier work juxtaposed to show each artist's direction and growth. It is worthwhile, here, to go through the prints of some of the significant printmakers of this active and famous 'Guild.' For this purpose, we select three out of the twelve members, namely, Dattatraya Apte, Moti Zharotia and Subba Ghosh.

DATTATRAYA APTE
Vision of Innocence

Like in William Blake's 'Songs of Innocence', Apte too tries to look into the child's mind. The sensibilities we have forgotten over the years, have been revealed through the child's experience. Thus, resulting in forms changing its identity. The innocence and ignorance of a child is a blessing in disguise. His innocence lies in the way he laughs, cries and plays. He runs after a bird to catch it, very confidently, as if he is really going to catch it. This is an experience not only for the child, but for the onlooker too.

Apte's imagery bears a very close relationship with his personal life experiences. The birth of his son brought about a radical change in his visual imagery. Growing up with his son converted Apte's perception of this world. His son's emerging cognizance of the world around him and discovery of nature by the young mind, became his own. "Looking through his child's eyes, Apte experienced the wonder and beauty of nature and its creations, awareness of which is so obfuscated and corrupted in grownups. His suite of intimate wooden gratings reveals this pristine vision of nature. Later, he transferred his medium to mezzotint, exploring the sensuousness of the rich velvety tones it created. The circular format that he was working in gave him a new degree of freedom, imparting his images with a sense of dynamism." When we go forward with this statement, we come to know that the completeness of a circle itself becomes a metaphor of self-contained world, in which space exists like the universe in its infinity.
Before we go on for good in the trail of infinity, let us go back to the year 1953, which signifies his birth year during which he was born at Miraj, Maharashtra. Apte studied drawing and painting at Pune. Upon graduating in 1974, his teaching assignment in the same town led to an encounter with J.D. Gondhekar, who introduced him to printmaking. Thus began Apte's lifelong passion for the medium. In Pune, he was in an intellectually stimulating atmosphere, so he started working on his early wood blocks, plywood and zinc-plates. He was impressed by a few exhibitions of prints organized by Max Muller Bhawan. These activities created enough motivation in Apte to study printmaking in depth.

Through to-and-fro correspondence, Apte wrote to me in November 1994; "When I was studying at Baroda (1978-80), I was struggling to understand the medium. I worked in all the possible mediums, I was not concerned about the image, but the medium only. In the last six or eight months, I decided to work on a theme of 'Auto'. This theme I did in lithography, etching and engraving. I chose this subject only to keep the distance between viewer and the subject matter. There, I can see the subject objectively in all the formal qualities. I was dealing only with the volume, the rotundity, the movement of shapes, interlocking of them. I avoided the element of colour and did all these prints in black and white, so that the subject can be given maximum strength."

Rajeev Lochan has an interesting approach to Apte's prints. His recollections of Apte as a friend and contemporary, travel back to their days at the Faculty of Fine Arts, M.S. University of Baroda, where both of them struggled to establish their own metier; "The environment that the institution of those years generated was that of immense exposure, freedom, and self-discipline, which provided scope for 'each seed to grow into a tree,' maintaining its personalized approach and identity. There was ample scope for interaction and criticism from stalwarts like K.G. Subramanyan, Jeram Patel and Jyoti Bhatt, among others, which provided fertile ground for growth." Apte therefore obtained immense experience in various mediums of printmaking, especially the technique of silk-screen. He asserts that the opportunity of working and managing a professional silk screen studio at Baroda provided an opportunity to experiment and realize the various possibilities and insights of the medium resulting in a series of multi-layered perceptive reflections of the dazzling urban. Apte never gave up the other printmaking media, he

178
often experimented with lithography, etching and engraving, searching to discover the personification of the inner character and innate personality of these objects of utility.

Migrating to Delhi in 1980, Apte joined the Garhi Studios, where he continued working on his earlier themes in black and white, but already his visual imagery began to reflect the busy cosmopolitan capital that he was becoming a part of. As an active printmaker, Apte worked hard in a professional screen-printing studio during 1980-82. This professional studio gave Apte a first hand experience in screen printing helping him to develop his visual imagery at the same time. By this time, he was able to go forward to his significant series of silk-screen prints, which basically were based on the show windows of Delhi shops. Struck by the multi-layered reflections on them, we can refer here to his ‘City Reflections’ 1983. This collage of reflected imagery in a way symbolized the upwardly mobile aspirations of a big city. It is amazing to know the aspects of the city of Delhi, which captivated Apte’s imagery. This historical city with its innumerable ruins that dot the map of Delhi, and its flickering city lights that dominated his prints.

I would like to enhance Apte’s theme of ‘City Reflections,’ so that it is more adequate to approach his own concept: “Once I was passing by the show window of a bookshop. There, through the glass I saw books inside, superimposed by reflected images on the glass panel as well as the parked vehicles behind me and the cityscape on the opposite side of the road. Here, I got an answer to my problem of showing the third dimension on a two-dimensional plane. It was like a puzzle. Here, the glass and light play major roles in forming the total image, which finds expression in my prints. My ‘City Reflections’ came in full measure only during my sessions at Garhi Studios at Delhi in 1982.”

The artist depicts things seen around him, not the things which have complete identify in themselves, but the ones which are rather accidental or ephemeral, like passing images on glass panel. He lays a good deal of emphasis on architectural elements, like columns, staircases and perspectives of buildings and concentrates on the juxtaposition of the images formed on the glass and those seen through. To enrich our understanding of this theme, let us quote Vinod Kumar, “The images formed on glass panel with their surface appearances portray the visual expression of an urban set-up seen through the
reflection on glass. The plate used by the artist is an acrylic sheet on which he works freely with a sharp needle drawing the outline, and for smudged lines and the grainy spread of colour, he rubs sand paper. The printed result appears like an etching with aquatint. Apte’s presentation and clarification of a city underlines an alert observation. His graphic print lays emphasis on basic formal elements, which are represented as seen through the normal eye or with the lens of a camera.”

By the year 1984, Apte completely shifted to another captivating series of ruins of Delhi. This thematic and pictorial contrast provided scope for an inner search, exploiting images retained in the mind; often working directly with the glue and exploring the qualities of the ‘tactile world.’ Apte had also completed an exceptionally beautiful set of colour silk-screen prints. In his work, the focal point is not the figure, and yet it is incomplete without it. He conveys the atmosphere as a whole, which includes a variety of objects, forming a totality of visual experience, which is urbane and refined.

Let us move to another aspect of Apte’s career: we have already referred to the birth of his son, which brought him close to the nuances of the innocence. The personal world of a child unfolds both with a sense of discovery and awe. The myriad reflections of a communion with nature from a standpoint that he had long outgrown generated a series of Mezzotints exploiting the contemplative and the sensuous. This spirit of innocence, moves in the form of the child’s playful acts with a squirrel, a bird, a tree, moon, etc., in the pictorial space, which is like the mind of a child, where he becomes an integral part of the landscape with the birds and animals. The perception of the landscape changes because the vision is mingled with fantasy. It now becomes a ‘vision of innocence.’ Now, the Mother is an embodiment of the totality of a world for child, as seen in one of Apte’s wood-engraving prints of the year 1990, the child watching birds with the mother. We can refer here to his another wood engraving ‘Untitled,’ but it shows the concept of ‘daddy is stronger than tiger.’ However, in a further series of the year 1992 wood engraving also, the mother is depicted as a total embodiment in the form of Nature. Nature takes care of the child and protects him.

Let us approach his theme of 1992, ‘Nature is the Mother.’ In this black and white wood-engraving, we see, “At the centre of Apte’s universe sits the child playing and dreaming with the birds and squirrels, the sparrows and the cat, and the tiger of the tales

180
he heard until he dozed off at night, again dreaming of a whispering woodland that is alive with small creatures. It is a child’s innocent response to the teeming life around. It is his tender love and feeling for every blade of grass, for anything that moves and plays with him. And Apte has made fine prints of this world in wood-engraving and mezzotints.\textsuperscript{6} say Santo Datta.

However, what is most significant is Apte’s mastery in designing with numerous components – moulding, elongating and dwarfing them into a meaningful pictorial unity. Santo Datta highlights this aspect when he says; “Apte has done all these characteristics with energized organic and animal forms. Seen from any side as the base, all the parts form a convincing picture of the child’s universe of innocence, love dreams and tenderness for anything living. The squirrel’s fluffy tail can be described in a lively curve of the topographical features of the very woodland and a flying sparrow\textsuperscript{7} can carry on its wings the whole universe of living creatures and the very woodland the child loves so much. Apte excels in white-lined intricacies of animal and organic forms and their continuously changing relationship\textsuperscript{7} Thus, resulting in forms changing their identity due to the child’s sensibility and experience. At times, a human body becomes a part of nature, a cloud or sky, which is handled in a perfect harmony between content and form, making it look magical. Thus, a tree embodying an animal or human, is not an image reflecting reality, not a sign replacing it but a method of duplicating reality by the magical means of mastery over forms. G. Vinod Kumar says, of the round artwork ‘Crescent Moon,’ “Where the artist plays with the negative and positive dimensions of buildings and an illusionary landscape as if the images are seen in a well through the reflection of water. These works of the year 1992 are very lucid when compared to his earlier works, which are relatively stronger in approach towards volume of ‘Machines,’ ‘Automobiles’ and subject like ‘Trains’. The forms, which emerge, are very lyrical, creating a fantasy. It is neither a documentation of an event, nor an issue. It is a lucid expression of the child’s fantasy.”\textsuperscript{8} Apte’s preoccupations around the mid-90s are a progression of the earlier concerns, manifesting and formalizing themselves into a newer format with a sense of freedom, both of image and material. The quazi-print-relief images exploiting the tactile bring about coherence in terms of concept, material, dimensionality and surface quality.
Rejeev Lochan reveals a new aspect, which may play a significant role in Apte’s career. “The reflections of his visit to Nepal as well as the encounters with the Madhubani painters utilizing the iconographic and the naïve, are amalgamated and are not intended to be read as visual narratives or referential. They appear as constructions in pulp revealing the subtleties of the experiences of ‘printmaking in a perceptive mould.’ They are prints that cast an ‘evocative shadow’ and in colour, perhaps the flight of imagination of the artist believes in synthesis and not the synthetic, searching and working towards newer languages for his creative endeavors. The orchestration of space, form and colour reveals a certain fluidity; forms in relief blend with those that are on the surface and colour often creating an intermingling of relief and flat surfaces.” In fact, this quasi blend of the naïve and the subtle are visually close to the conventionally imperfect, which creates a symbolic connotation. The attitude aptly surmises that ‘The idea is not the illustration, but the illustration is the idea’ as has been said by Paul Klee.

Around the mid-90s, Apte came again to a new series of ruins, but with a difference. Now he concentrated on the dimensional surfaces to enrich his images. These beautiful surfaces enhanced his prints and gave them a new attractive outlook. Apte left this theme quickly to capture other ideas, which he conveyed by working with paper pulp. He saw the ‘Wounds’ series of Somnath Hore and took inspiration and got influenced by Somnaths’s expressive graphic artworks and his completely new technique. Apte felt the need to learn the craft of papermaking, when he grasped the craft properly he then was able to work with paper pulp adequately. For this medium, he had to develop new blocks or moulds to cast his paper pulp, by utilizing the latex mould. He tried various methods, till he found the most suitable technique for his expression. It is a mixture of two techniques: a unique paper pulp cast and intaglio. The proper example for this innovative process is his ‘Untitled’ 1995. Apte took forward steps in this experimental technique, seeking new horizons. He started to prepare reliefs in wax or any suitable material by pasting them and applying latex over relief, preparing rubber mould and Plaster of Paris mould, both side by side, to create different effects. Then he came upon the idea of trying to incorporate woodcut, etching images along with the pulp cast or printing on the surface of the cast itself.
P.N. Mago once said; “Apte is consistently competent in every media or technique that he handles and has ingeniously made use of objects in creating visual images. The results are striking and show his aptitude for technical virtuosity.” It is worthwhile to move directly to Rajeev Lochan - an old friend of Apte - to reveal another aspect of Apte’s career; “The need to create is essentially driven from an inner drive to search; a journey that one undertakes, with a sense of commitment to one’s own life and aspirations. It is often simpler to look back in retrospect and trace the footsteps that one has traversed, in both one’s own context and in the context of a close associate, only if there are recallable, lingering images and memories of the past.” Lastly, we may find something in Apte’s ‘Figures’ that recall the vision of William Blake, who was deeply shaken by the slow rise of an urban culture in the 18th century England, by the urban poverty and squalor, by the slowly rising tide of dehumanizing forces.

MOTI ZHAROTIA

Imaginative World of Fantasy

For Moti, graphics is like magic. A mosaic of colours and images come together to create a new composition. The patience and labour of developing each graphic melts away as each magical image takes a definite form. Amongst the various graphic mediums, serigraphy has always been a source of fascination for him. It is now over 20 years since he first began experimenting in it, and yet the mystery of serigraphy continues to attract him. Moti points out; “I see every serigraph as a challenge and keep on working on it until I feel I have exploited its possibilities to the fullest. Everyday is a new day and I continue to explore and capture images on my serigraphs. I yearn to delve deeper and deeper to find a greater expression for my imaginative world. My works are representative of all that is happening around me, they are enriched by my personal experiences and reflect my thinking. The objects I draw do not operate as symbols in a total design, but tap the subconscious. In totality, my silk screens look lyrical, poetically calm and peaceful. They reveal a meditative mood and sometimes even move beyond this world.”

Moti often puts himself in a spot by using unmatched and different family of colours or unusual division of space. But though these experiments were trying, they ultimately gave him an absolute mastery over the art of silk-screen printing. The charm of vivid colours on a silk screen medium had captivated him when he was in college, he
began playing with colours and soon he learnt how to make a few silk prints using the photo process method. This process utterly fascinated him. Talking about his early approach to this medium, Moti recollects, "Soon I stalled silk screen printing in my own studio and got beautiful effects of colouis. Frequently, I soften the colour density by adding white and using gradation of colour tones that hint at a delicacy of movement. To distort the flat areas, I sometimes overlap the forms. My effort has been to create colours and forms that are close to reality."\(^2\)

By the late 80s, LKA gave him a chance to explore the possibilities of photo process on the silk screen medium by offering him a research grant for one year. No doubt, it was an extremely long-drawn-out process. Let us listen to him, "It is only you squeeze the colour on screen that you see the magic of colour emerging. I have printed nearly 24 impressions of colour on silk screen. I broke the set norms of acceptable colours. Each time I created a different combination of colours and never repeated the same colour schemes\(^3\)

By the early 90s, it was obvious that his silk screen prints began to acquire a wide variety of forms: plants, trees, clouds, moon, rainbow, water, human figures, animals, etc. These objects may not appear to be as realistic as they are in nature, but it is his way of paying tribute to this world and its living beings. This beautiful world we live in compels Moti to represent it in his own imaginative style, he uses the medium of drawing, painting and graphics to express himself. "Chagall and Picasso are his favourite painters, and it was Chagall's works that had highly influenced him. Among the Indian contemporary artists, he likes the works of M.F. Husain, Manjit Bawa, K.G. Subramanian and Ramachandran."\(^4\)

Moti believes that an artist should understand the medium completely before he gains some kind of command over it. If the artist is ignorant about his medium, he can not effectively express himself. It will not only reflect in his work, but how can he expect people to understand when he himself has failed to do so. However, active artists often believe in progressing gradually. Moti quotes some such artists and recounts, "There are so many artists like Arpita Singh, Barve and Manjit Bawa, who entered this field after a long struggle. They never believed in projecting themselves. It was not easy to understand their attitude in the beginning, but ultimately they had slowly but surely succeeded. There
can be no doubts as to their talent or dedication, they have brought alive the art scene today.4

In India, serigraphy came into limelight in the early 1970s. Moti’s work ends up being compared with Manjit Bawa’s, but Moti disagrees. He points out that the proportions of figures in his works are quite unlike Bawa’s. While Bawa has simplified the human figure, he has yet to attain that stage, he feels. The clincher is the colours used—while Bawa uses warm colours, Moti prefers very cool ones. However, cool colours are not the only ones Moti uses. In ‘Confluence’ 1991, he has used yellow to good effect, although the blues and pinks do assert their presence. Yellow as a colour is dominating and it naturally follows that it has to be rendered with caution and understanding. In this print, yellow comes through in a manner which is best described as restrained and vivacious.

Moti has made an attempt to express his homage to the world, particularly nature and living beings. His works dealing with subjects which are either in movement or appear to reach, represents something happening.5 A kaleidoscopic effect is projected by his works. The ambience in them deals with the inner fancies of man, particularly wishful thinking, aiming for the impossible, the rainbow of dreams. “It is a world marked by free and unhindered flow of thought and action, as has been brought out by the curving lines that mostly make up Moti’s work. It is almost as if he feels that in life sharp angles are non-existent.”5 He dealt with the female form as the subject of his works, perhaps to underscore the idea that his work verges on fantasy and dreams.

Let us have a look at his background and go back to the year 1953 when he was born in Delhi. While studying in the College of Art at Delhi, from where he passed out in 1972, Moti got the opportunity to explore linocuts6 and later extend the same to silk-screen medium with photographic process. Following some of his earliest prints constructed with converging perspective, Moti began using actual objects from his environment juxtaposing them in such a manner as to induce an element of fantasy. “The urge of the evolving thought process of the artist sought change. This led him to distort the object of his landscape, selecting each motif carefully as a key to his self-identification and inner soul. The conclusions he arrived at were consequent to the many careful pencil drawings he did before; he starts to adjust all these studies in order to transfer them to his
prints. It was the pencil that he chose as a medium for his initial explorations between 1987 and 1995. The flexibility of the medium assisted him to create new shapes at variance from direct representation of nature. Such activities were very helpful to him in his meticulous screen-printing.

Belonging to Rajasthan, Moti and his elder brother artist Jai Zharotia, carry with them the multicoloured palette of a desert people, all the way from the Navajo Indians across the Sahara, to Baluchistan and their own Rajasthan. Colour is a lot to desert-dweller, and one has only to fly across the Sahara desert to see the rich rose, purple, blue and turquoise rock surfaces that intermingle with pale yellow, pink and orange sand. It is these colours that are the dream stuff for both brothers. One has to look at the delicacy of the tones of colour and forms: human figures, plants, clouds, water, butterflies, etc. K.L. Kaul highlights some significant points of view covering Moti’s prints: “As the point launches out on a journey of movement symbolizing action, leaving behind in linear and curvilinear traceries of its advancement, a vision of dimension and structure emerges, surviving on the deeply ingrained inner abstracts of experience. His subjects are not narrative in time and therefore of a story-like nature. The organizational aspects of his compositions do not attempt anything so sonorous. What you notice is the captivating thrill of movements spontaneously feeding upon themselves like a serpent alertly going behind a tree. Moti shows cultivation and dedication in the grasp of his skills.” In fact, he has masterly skill in both drawing and screen-printing. However, Moti’s work remains an expression of his feeling and he wanted his screen-prints to look lyrical, poetic, romantic and at times serene and meditative.

Desire might be the key to his luminous serigraphs. They reflected an uncluttered mind seeking joy, companionship and depth in life. It is evident that the pursuit of such goals must provide in life certain moments of ecstasy, which we find reflected in so many of his serigraphs. Suneet Chopra reveals some significant points concerning Moti’s prints; “There is often the sweep of a rainbow to identify it, or a figure bent like a crescent, circumambulating a space above an undulating ocean, a field of flowers or whatever. Here, we see that the skill with which his work is accomplished is evident from the smoothness of colour gradation and tonality. Each space on the paper is meticulously mapped out giving his work its silky sheen. Lately, he has been exploring the possibility
of blending different colours and combining them, often running the colour squeeze between ten to twenty times to get the proper effect.8 Further, we see that he had begun to use transparent colours, so we find these prints having acquired the look of watercolours. Moti, however, has dedicated himself single-mindedly to the serigraphs until he has squeezed every last possibility out of it. We can rightly say that none of his prints could have been achieved without years of painstaking work. “His journey will obviously take him through many complexities of luminosity, opaqueness and transparency; silky smoothness and discontinuous tracery, as well as to different relations between his often used elements, all of them through the looking glass of an uncluttered mind that seeks to savour what life has to offer.”9

Looking carefully to his drawing, we can find something that is almost a silk-like quality combined with a winsome tautness in the manner, in which he handles both of inner and illusionistic space, investing it with multi-layer dimensions and planes. The tingling thrill characterizes his zestful delineations. It is interesting to have a look at his fascinating tree serpent, tree and other lively elements involving in their graceful movements while the atmosphere is richly enhanced by the textures of tree trunks that are quite vibrantly alive to slanting charges of light, captivatingly succulent broad leaves – especially in his drawings - with flute or pipe players hypnotizing snake3 and in turn hypnotized by their internally highly controlled but bewitchingly relaxed moves. In fact, his drawing often has the quality of being a very flexible and expressive medium, where we can see our ideas develop and mature instantly as we sketch on paper. While giving shape to our thoughts, several beautiful shapes and forms hitherto unknown come into being. Moti has some further point of view: “My rapport with this medium developed during my college days, when I had spent hours sketching. My control over my sketch pencil was so complete that it motivated me to hold two exhibitions of my pencil drawings.”5 These exhibitions met with a great deal of success prompting him to pursue the same medium.”3

Quite a few of his works are whimsical; a bugler playing music to plants, a dialogue between an admonitory philosopher and a very owlish owl. But he can seize God’s handiwork, nature, in the hand lens of his small drawings. Krishna Chaitanya has a deeper approach to Moti’s work, “… the ecological balance of fauna and flora, the drama
of deadly struggle for existence in the drawing of cats and mice, the fellowship of man and his animal brethren in the fine picture of a man fondling his dog, the latter’s form being the native white of the paper contoured by the grey of the enfolding human figure. The great promise in his drawing comes out in ‘Girl with a Bouquet’ with its seven veils of silken tone that reveal and conceal the visage.” Moti’s drawings give to the untouched white the soft glow of ivory, while there is an evocative quality, sinister and satirical at once. He has an obsession with the tree, so he imparts a new form to it - a fantastic form that is like a flower. These forms of trees represent the various stages of blossoming of flower - perhaps to symbolize the different aspects and moods of life. By the mid-80s, Moti’s screenprints evolved to be engagingly alive with the unique charm of a freshness, which is dourly resourced by childhood memories of the artist’s earliest encounters with life and its multitudinous expressions as well as its fantasy atmosphere and joyful colours.

Moti employs his paraphernalia of the external world to lay bare suppressed fantasies. Whether he envisions a lack of order - a human order, in the world, it is difficult to say. But in his objects and images, he achieves the feelings of love and hate or fear, associations, sensual experiences – culled from the past. His depictions of human reality seem to be an expression of bitter and relentless but unconscious struggle over his image of the moral. Far from being limited with the sensory world, Moti has endeavoured to penetrate deep into its reality. He attempts to transfigure human, animal and organic forms with modification of their physical, anatomical or botanical aspects. Moti says, “Still I am trying to represent my own world through my drawing and silk screen. The struggle is still to continue.”

SUBBA GHOSH
Symbolizing the Juxtaposed Images

Subba Ghosh's etchings of story characters are meticulously executed in the depths of the black that dominates and from which a world of mystery emerges to intrigue the mind of the viewer. His treatment as in his etching ‘Hair Raising Story’ for instance, clearly establishes himself as a classicist in style and romantic by temperament. His litho print of 1990 showing an old woman's face, is among his more evocative pieces and is technically acknowledged to be beyond compare. "Subba's work strives to capture the hypnotic drama of one of the finest symbols of libido, the human figure, conceived
both as a demon and a hero, for instance, in his awarded etching entitled ‘The Don’ 1993*1 may reveal this concept. It also shows a very good example of Subba’s intention and his individual way of image making; it might also convey other aspects of his calibre. Man, in Subba’s work reaches out from his material plane to the spiritual one and attempts to bring about a fusion of the both. It is the absolutely mundane that forms the setting within which man struggles transmutating between the emotions of joy and sorrow. Like the sun, man sets his course by immutable laws, completes the journey and sinks into the darkness only to rise. These metabolic transitions, symbolic of nature’s primordial procreational pattern form the core of Subba’s work.”

Subba has an intellectual approach to the human existence in this unlimited space. For him, everything has been moving imperceptibly, but consistently, for eons. Every breath, every glance, every touch is governed by this supreme truth. Change is the quintessence of all our existence. Who moves it? Wherefrom? Whereto? It is interesting to approach the exact intention of Subba; “From the moment of my birth, I begin to weave a cocoon of this space around me. The body and mind is floated within and there they exist; so essential for our survival. Every conflict or confluence, repulsion or attraction is the consequence of these spaces floating into proximity. We all seek our place within this vast infinity. Yet, no one exists in isolation. My walls are just the other side of another person’s wall.” Following this statement, Subba comes to point out the Man-and-Woman relationship, they both live together, cross roads, make love. Subba continued; “Do not mock the mundane, for the universe is built on it, carrying within itself the seed of the ultimate reality. Real, is what I accept to be; real is relative, reality does not exist. It is created. Pushing these dialectics into harmonious combinations, a new reality emerges. Another cocoon?”

Born in 1961 in Delhi, studied at the College of Arts, New Delhi. between 1980 and 1984, he moved on to the Surikov Institute of Fine Arts, Moscow. The inherent proclivity for the human form and the desire to hone his technical skills to realize the perfection of figure found its destiny in the rigorous and indepth study of the human body at the academy. Around the mid-80s, Subba started his new phase, from now on, we see that there is a fine line of distinction between the sensual, erotic, obscene and intimate, which is certainly not easy to draw.*4 Fascinated by the primal instincts of man, his
undying need for union and procreation, Subba deals with this content in peculiar situations and equations.

His prints have been etched out in unusually black areas with scattered highlights to bring out the shady character of the theme. We may refer here to his excellent etching ‘Abode of Gods’ 1994*4 and also to his another etching of the same year, ‘What Happens in the Dark’. Let us also remember his linocut print, ‘Venuses at Home’ 1992, which shows his masterly handling of the technique and also indicates his powerful depiction of the human figure. Roobina Karode reveals some significant points of view concerning Subba’s prints; “In ‘Adonis’, all isolated images conjunct to sarcastically symbolize the air of sexuality. The etching, ‘Life after Darwin’1993, has the sensual female under reflected light*4 and the surrounding objects and space breathe in deliberate obscurity. Seriously inclined to explore the immense possibilities inherent in printmaking, Subba has acquired command on diverse techniques like etching, lithography, linocut, silk screens, etc.”

Subba’s compositions invite unique spatial treatment. Images juxtaposed in discrepant scales from unusual views are used by Subba to condense the essentials of his theme. In ‘Smile Please’ intaglio, 1994,*5 Subba provides indirect hints to the prejudices practiced by man in the name of religion. Each isolated image is transmuted into a referential symbol that together enhances the significance of the theme. Subba, in fact, is intrigued by Life – an ongoing theme carried on by human striving. Personal incidents, conversations, arguments, stories, myths and legends, all to Subba provide reflections on his ‘anthropocentric’ inquiries. Smitten by the human form and its manifold dimensions; in this regards, Roobina Karode, points out some of his significant characteristics; “Subba, infuses wit, humour or satire when rendering the ‘seen’ and the ‘sensed’ in his work. The sacred and the profane, the heroic and the weak, the naive and the worldly-wise, all are put to scrutiny by Subba’s incisive eye. The ‘mundane’ is fertile for Subba, where each and every man struggles to infuse ‘meaning’ in life. Man’s hedonistic flaunting, his power-games and his desire for fame are frequent subjects of his prints. Exposed to diverse environments during his formal training, Subba’s art has been preened by these cross-cultural influences that stressed different ideologies and forms of learning.”

190
One cannot but admire in Subba's prints the realism of the human form, its corporeality that is thoroughly investigated, always to capture the evasive and the latent that resides within the physical. The network of his powerful lines help Subba define denser and lighter zones through varying pressure and control as he makes them fluently run over one another. Oscillating between their incisive and soothing characters, Subba at times leaves his lines visibly pronounced and other times smudges them for the desired effect. To etch out his characters that most of the times are caught unawares, amidst the web of their immediate existence, Subba has a remarkable command on capturing the rhetorics of human expression in its variety. Let us listen to him, "As we entwine into a new synthesis, every day and night, vibrations of this metabolic flux sears through and a new vision is born. But only for a moment, then it explodes into a blinding light like a dying star. Darkness rules again. Once more, we float off into the boundless waiting for the recurrence of another sublime reunion. The Artist is just a window with coloured glasses. The colours are his own. The drama is the same. Wherefrom? Whereto? I do not know."