

JKAACL organizes 'Meet the Eminent' with Dr. Lalit Gupta



■ JANG S. VERMAN

Jammu & Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages organized a literary interaction titled 'Meet the Eminent' with Dr. Lalit Gupta. The event drew an impressive gathering of academicians, writers, cultural personalities, and students from across the region.

In her welcome address, Ms. Sonali Arun Gupta, Additional Secretary of JKAACL, stated that Dr. Lalit Gupta's contribution to the art, culture, and heritage of Jammu and Kashmir is

immense and continues to serve as a guiding force for the new generation of the region. Scholarly papers were presented by Dr. Mrinalini Atry and Nidhi Singh.

In his address, Dr. Lalit Gupta shared personal anecdotes linked with the cultural movement of the Jammu region. He spoke about the role of the Institute of Music and Fine Arts Jammu in promoting visual arts, especially painting, sculpture, and terracotta art. He also shared his experiences with legendary artists such as G R Santosh,

Master Sansar Chand, and Vijay Gupta, among others. Speaking about performing arts, Dr. Gupta stated that Jammu has been contributing immensely to theatre and stands on par with the national and international theatre scene. He also reflected on literary developments in Dogri, Gojri, Pahari, Urdu, and Hindi, sharing his experiences with the literary movement of the region. Dr. Gupta further spoke about the importance of documenting place names in Jammu, preserving folklore traditions, and the cultural significance of

water bodies in art and heritage.

Prominent personalities who participated in the interactive session through questions included Khalid Hussain, Jitendra Udhamपुरi, Naginder Singh Jamwal, Agni Shekhar, Aslam Qureshi, Deepak Kumar, Rajinder Tickoo, Naseeb Singh Manhas, Vijay Saraf, Shailender Singh and Pradeep Dutta among others. The event was moderated by Dr. Abid Ahmad, Editor English at JKAACL, while Dr. Javaid Rahi, Chief Editor, presented the vote of thanks.

Dr. Lalit Gupta- Brief Introduction

An art & cultural historian, columnist, actor and filmmaker, Lalit Gupta is a renowned personality in the field of art and culture of Jammu and Kashmir.

Born on 29th August 1953, at Lakhampur, Jammu, he is a Post Graduate in Museology and History of Art from Faculty of Fine Arts, M.S. University, Vadodara. He headed the Department of Art History at the Institute of Music & Fine Arts (IMFA) at Srinagar and Jammu. He has also done a Post Graduate Diploma in Journalism, and a Doctorate in Buddhist Art & Architecture of Jammu. He has also been a Visiting Faculty at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Jammu for Post-Graduate Diploma Course in Journalism (2001-2006) and a Guest Faculty at Centre for Museology and Heritage Studies, University of Jammu (2012-13).

Dr. Lalit Gupta has remained associated with the prestigious projects to document the heritage, paintings and sculptures of Jammu & Kashmir. He undertook a Photo Documentation of Fresh Water Springs, under a project from Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture & Languages. He has created at IMFA, Jammu, a rare archive of photos of important monuments and art works from different parts of Bharat and the three regions- Ladakh, Kashmir and Jammu.

He was awarded a Senior Fellowship by the Department of Culture, New Delhi (2013-2015) to bring out a 'Directory of Artistic and Cultural Sites of Jammu'. He has also completed in 2022 the prestigious Indian Council for Historical Research Project on the 'Place Names of Jammu'.

In the academic field apart, he has to his credit number of specialized writings on contemporary and traditional arts of Jammu. Commissioned by J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, he has authored the book titled 'Intangible Heritage of Jammu'. Dozens of his research papers presented in national and international aca-

ademic seminars, conferences on various aspects of Jammu and Kashmir heritage, culture, literature and history of art, have appeared as chapters in books.

He was engaged by Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board to prepare a concept design for setting up Dogra Heritage Centre and Museum. He has curated a contemporary art exhibition 'March 99' for Amar Mahal Museum and Library, Jammu, and a retrospective show of Suman Gupta, a leading visual artist of J&K for the University of Jammu in 2000.

Dr. Lalit Gupta is a public speaker, who gives lectures and talks on art, theatre and various aspects of Culture. He is a polyglot. Along with mother tongue Dogri, he can speak and write Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Pothohari and English. Due to chance encounters and exposure, he is also partial to Marathi, Gujarati and Kashmiri languages. He has studied Sharda and Gurmukhi scripts also.

He has acted as Expert/Member of National/State Level Consultative/Advisory/Special Committees such as Jury Member for Sahitya Akademi Award-2021, Member, ICCR's Regional Advisory Committee, (2012-13), Regional Office, Jammu, Member, Remuneration Evaluation Committee called by J&K Cultural Academy (2012), Expert to Inspect of Records of NGO's for financial assistance from J&K Cultural Academy (2012), Member, Expert Committee on Conservation, Regional Directorate (North) Archaeological Survey of India. (2009-12), Nominated Member, (SLIC) National Mission for Antiquities & Monuments, Archaeological Survey of India (2009-12), Member, Program Advisory Committee, All India Radio Kashmir Jammu (2015-17 & 2010-12), Member, Advisory Board, Amar Mahal Museum and Library Jammu (2009-10), Member, National Consultative Committee for Dogri, Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Mysore (2005), JU Ex-

hibition titled Jammu & Ladakh-A look into the Past, Heritage Cell, University of Jammu, Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Museum, University of Jammu.

His academic positions included: Member, Faculty of Music and Fine Arts, University of Jammu. (2009-12), Member, Board of Studies, Faculty of Music and Fine Arts, University of Jammu (2009-12), Member, Board of Studies, Centre for Museology, University of Jammu (2009-10), Member, Board of Studies, SVAPADA (School of Visual and Performing Arts, Design and Architecture), University of Jammu (2008), Member Advisory Committee, SVAPADA, University of Jammu (2008).

He was a Special Invitee at the Two-Day Conference on Pluralism and Diversity in Jammu & Kashmir called by Interlocutors for J&K at Jammu on 11-12 July 2011.

A multi-faceted personality, his creative involvements include scripting and directing for Archaeological Survey of India, Department of Culture and Doordarshan number of documentaries on art heritage of Jammu. He has acted in theatre, television and films and was an approved voice-actor and feature writer for AIR Jammu.

One who has been awarded Amateur Journalist 'Saraswati Samman', Lalit Gupta's significant interface with civil society has been through his write ups in newspapers and magazines. Starting as a columnist for Indian Express in 1997, Lalit Gupta, today, is a popular columnist of Daily Excelsior, a leading regional newspaper. His informed commentaries and opinions on culture and heritage and reviews on art exhibitions and theatre performances are savored by readers.

His full-page Year-End Cultural-Round-Ups published regularly in Daily Excelsior since more than one decade are hailed as an invaluable archival reference for gleaming the high-points of cultural life in Jammu and Kashmir.

Exhibition of Paintings by Rajinder Pal Singh opens at Kala Kendra

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A five-day painting exhibition by noted artist Rajinder Pal Singh was inaugurated this on 28th March, 2026 at Kala Kendra, Jammu, in the presence of prominent artists, writers, and art lovers of the region. Padma Shri Rajinder Tickoo, an eminent sculptor of J&K was the Chief Guest on this occasion. The inaugural function was also attended by senior artist Vijay Saraf 'Meenaghe'; eminent art historian and critic Dr. Lalit Gupta; and Dr. Javaid Rahi, Secretary, Kala Kendra, who were present on the days.

In his welcome address, Dr. Javaid Rahi highlighted that the primary objective of the exhibition is to provide a platform for local artists to showcase their work, particularly creations developed over long artistic journeys. He noted that the exhibition of 40 paintings reflects nearly 17 years of dedi-



icated artistic practice by the artist. Speaking on the occasion, Sh. Rajinder Tickoo described Rajinder Pal Singh as a prominent name in the field of modern art in Jammu. He remarked that Singh's work has consistently impressed him, adding that he has personally collected some of the artist's drawings/paintings.

Vijay Saraf 'Meenaghe', in his address, stated that Rajinder Pal Singh's works reflect the continuity of artistic traditions in the region. He observed that the paintings vividly express the artist's inner world through colors and urged the public to support artists by purchasing artworks and related creations. Dr. Lalit Gupta congratulated the artist for his distinctive style, which

sets him apart from others. He also appreciated the efforts of Kala Kendra in promoting artists by providing them with a platform to exhibit their work. Speaking about his exhibition, artist Rajinder Pal Singh said that his solo exhibition titled 'Sublime Nature' (2009-2026) is the outcome of his continuous engagement with modern art over the years.

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IAFA to organize Painters' Camp in April, 2026

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Indian Academy of Fine Arts (IAFA), Amritsar is organizing a National Painters' Camp at JKTDC Tourist Complex, Mansar Lake (Udhampur, J&K) from 3rd to 5th April, 2026 to commemorate the contribution of Late (Dr.) Baldev Gambhir, recipient of multiple times the National Award by Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi; Punab Lalit Kala Akademi Awards, and others. Eleven well known prominent and senior artists from different parts of the country, including members of executive committee and special invitees have been invited to participate in this camp.

Mssrs. Jang S. Verman, Jammu (Special Invitee), Gagan Gambhir, (Jalandhar, Varinder Pal Singh, Dharminder Sharma, Sukhpal Singh, Ravinder Dhillon, Narinder Singh and K S Gill, Amritsar; Atul Mehra, Chandigarh, Ajit Singh Jabbal, Hoshiarpur, O P Sharma, Jammu (Renowned artist and Director JKCA) will be the Coordinator for the camp).

During the proposed camp the artists would create one work each to pay tribute to Dr. Baldev Gambhir, an eminent artist from Amritsar who left for his heavenly abode during the recent past. A special tributes paying ceremony would also be organized during the camp, where high ranks of the Academy like Sh. Rajinder Mohan Singh



Chhinna, President Indian Academy of Fine Arts (IAFA); Sh. Shivdev Singh, Chairman IAFA; and Dr. P S Grover, Hon. Gen. Secretary IAFA will especially be present along with the artists, in this special Tributes Paying Ceremony.

It may be mentioned here that born in 1943, Dr. Baldev Gambhir studied at Government Arts College, Lucknow, and later taught art at BKK DAV College for Women in Amritsar. Dr. Gambhir was a Life-Member of Indian Academy of Fine Arts, Amritsar.

'Hanere Vichla Chanan'- A readable Short Story Book by R S Kanwal

■ JANG S. VERMAN

A Punjabi short stories book 'Hanere Vichla Chanan' by Rattan Singh Kanwal, a Punjabi short story from Kashmir, was released by Ekam Sahit Manch, Amritsar with the support of Bhai Vir Singh Nivas Sthan, Amritsar, in a function organized at the auditorium of Bhai Vir Singh Nivas Sthan, Lawrence Road, Amritsar on 14th March, 2026. The book of 128 pages with 17 short stories has been published by Azad Book Depot, Amritsar.

Rattan Singh Kanwal is a versatile writer who has contributed in different genres of Punjabi literature. So far, his six short story collections have been published. While creating his short stories, his emphasis remains on the issues of declining values in the political, social system; deteriorating relations due to/under the effect of modernity and modernization; human beings losing emotions of love affinity and relatedness; exploitation and injustice caused in the social, political, religious and economical systems in the contemporary world; migration of the youth, leaving behind their parents in isolation and breaking the social fabric in the society; and so on. As a whole the prevailing issues of the contem-

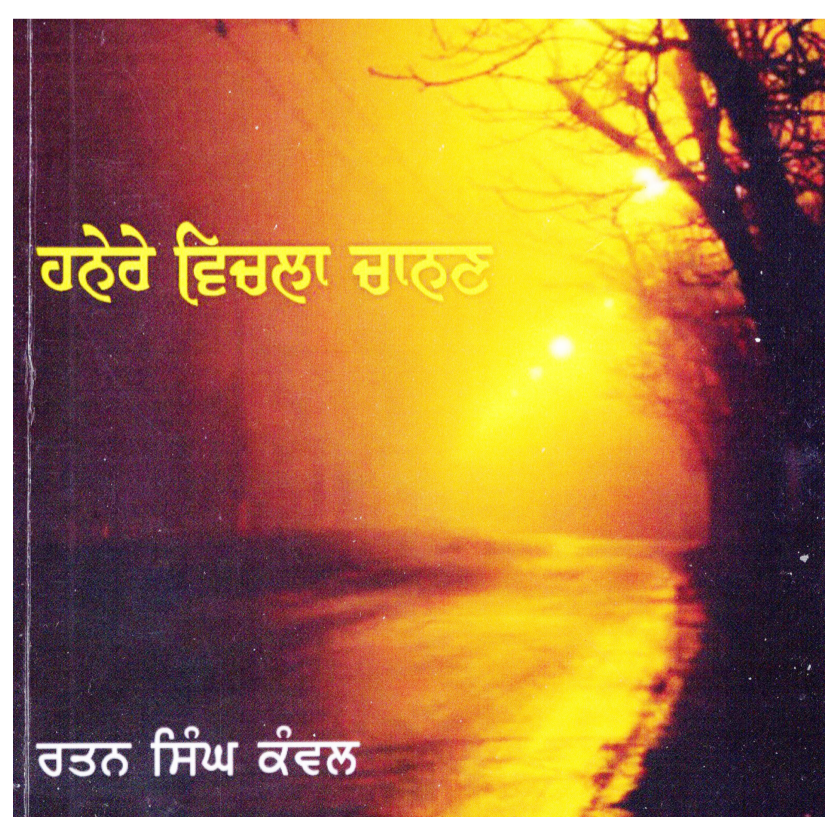
porary world have been under his scrutiny. He inspects the situations causing the impact of illnesses of the society, ponders over them and tries to suggest the way outs for spending better life.

The short story 'Koun Muya' is related to the emerging situations due to Covid-19 Pandemic... and oddities faced by the family members at various levels. The shift in relationship of members of the society, concern with the elements of Nature and elements of Nature appear in front of the story writer. 'Kheti Ujdi Zindgi Di' is a narration of tribal attacks during partition in 1947 and excesses on the Sikhs, causing their sacrifices. 'Profile Ik Saver Da' deals with problem of migration. 'Chappal Da Pair' tells about the tyranny of left out parents by the off-springs who leave for abroad. 'Navin Saver' and 'Yaadan Vichli Chhaya' deal with lust of the upper class casting its shadow over the needy and the down trodden, and ultimately rejecting them after using them. 'Happy Birthday' deals with the problems of the people of Kashmir which they had to face under the effect of terrorism in the Valley. 'Basti Te Bhasmakar' is a satire on prevailing political system where the ruling communities, under the influence of power, suppress the weaker



section and commoners as victims, thus resulting in destruction of the whole system, in which they too are finished.

There is vividness in the themes of the realist stories included in the book. The stories are the narratives in short, medium and long scripts. The psyche of the locals is also reflected in his expressions. At places sub plots are added to add curiosity. The psyche of the locals is also reflected in his expressions. Their longings, desires, compulsions and emerging crises have been reflected-



by these short stories. Locale tinge can be seen in diction

and language. For example, in the short story 'Bhaida Cheet' the conversation between husband and wife goes like this: "Main vi chalsaan" ... "Na, na, tu ghar hi rahna"... "Main ni rehndi, maahdi ravey jutti!... Main vi paise chaar kamasaan, Mamma ko vi deraan, bechhari Amma!"

'Bhaira Cheet' and 'Monalisa' are the stories depicting harassment of females at the hands of the males... and a satire on such situations emerging due to the unruly behavior of the males who blame females for every uneven eventuality, indicating towards the discrimination between the sexes. 'Gallery Vichla Photo' deals with infertility in a male and the desire of a female to have an issue... and the modern science & technology coming to her help. Similarly, 'Rupo' is a representation of developments taking place in the field of science & technology... nearly making robots having feelings like the human beings. 'Ghar Vapsi' points towards the effect of various taboos of religious, societal concerns and the children represent as their guide to understand the need of being natural. At times, back-flash technique is used to narrate a story.

As a whole the gift of the collection of short stories 'Hanere Vichla Chanan' by Rattan Singh Kanwal is worth reading. His efforts and contribution needs applause.