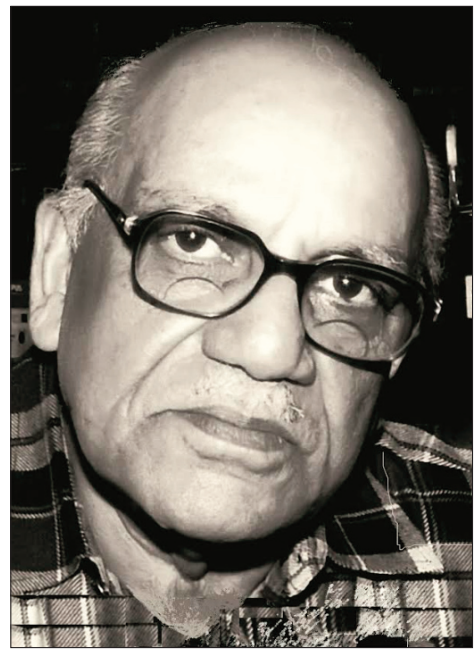


# Recalling India's foremost Veteran Printmaker: Jagmohan Chopra

PROF. D S KAPOOR



The evolution of printmaking has been profoundly shaped by digital technology, sparking debates on whether this marks the decline of traditional methods or a new era of artistic exploration. Contemporary printmaking is experiencing a Renaissance, with innovative techniques expanding the boundaries of creativity. The early 1980s to the late 20th century has been the essential period for artists, encouraging experimentation beyond painting and sculpture. While colour photography had already begun reshaping visual expression, black-&-white and monochrome photography explored unique ways to convey colour in digital imagery.

By the late 1980s, printmaking had gained significant recognition globally and in India, with numerous contemporary artists embracing the medium. In the early 20th century, screen printing became widely popular, championed by artists like Andy Warhol, Peter Blake and Robert Rauschenberg.

In India, printmaking as a serious artistic practice emerged in the 20th century, blending creativity with meticulous craftsmanship. Raja Ravi Varma was a pioneering figure, introducing Western Realism to Indian printmaking and shaping a new artistic movement.

Other key contributors include Chittaprosad Bhattacharya, Somnath Hore, Harendra Narayan Das, Krishna Reddy, Jyoti Bhatt, K. Laxma Goud, and Anupam Sud. However, no discussion of Indian printmaking is complete without acknowledging the contributions of Prof. Jagmohan Chopra, whose influence remains integral to its history.

Jagmohan Chopra is fondly remembered as a pioneering figure in Indian printmaking, whose mentorship and vision inspired an entire generation of artists to explore and embrace this medium.

He played a crucial role in introducing Collagraphy to India as a printmaking technique in which various materials are glued or sealed onto a rigid surface, such as paperboard or wooden ply, to create a printing plate.

Once inked, this plate transfers the artwork onto paper or another medium. Collagraphy is an environmental friendly process, as it does not require acids or wood engraving.

The term 'Collagraph' was coined by Glen Alps in the 1950s, derived from the Greek

words 'Kolla' (glue) and 'Graph' (drawing).

A highly respected artist, Prof. Jagmohan Chopra held senior positions in India's leading cultural institutions, including Lalit Kala Akademi; All India Fine Arts & Crafts Society (AIFACS), and Silpi Chakra, New Delhi; Govt. College of Art, and Government Museum & Art Gallery, Chandigarh.

As a distinguished educator, he taught at the Delhi College of Art and later served as the Principal of the Government College of Art, Chandigarh.

He was a recipient of numerous prestigious awards in his life time. Through his leadership and guidance, he profoundly influenced many of today's celebrated artists, leaving an enduring legacy in the field of Indian printmaking.

Jagmohan Chopra is widely regarded as an 'Artist's Artist', a visionary who was consistently ahead of his time in various artistic disciplines.

Best known as a revolutionary printmaker, he was also an accomplished photographer. Since the 1980s, he had been capturing and exhibiting photographs of remarkable beauty and impact.

His deep expertise in painting and printmaking greatly influenced his photography, particularly in his masterful use of colour and composition.

From the most Surreal Cuban Theatre series to the evocative Scenes of Everyday Life, his works radiate an inner brilliance and a painterly quality.

Born in 1935 in Lahore (now in Pakistan), Chopra enrolled in the Delhi Polytechnic's art department in 1951 and earned his National Diploma in Fine Arts in 1958. He then joined the faculty at College of Art, Delhi, where he taught until 1976.

That year, he, by succeeding Sushil Sarkar became the Principal of Government College of Art, Chandigarh. Under his leadership, the college underwent significant transformations. Its building was expanded and it was affiliated with Panjab University in 1978, and the five-year diploma was upgraded to a professional BFA Degree.

He also introduced printmaking as an independent course, sparking a surge of interest in the medium among young artists. Additionally, he pioneered the inclusion of Advertising Campaigns as a specialized assignment in Applied Art, equipping students with the creative and professional skills needed for the advertising industry.

From 1977 to 1983, he also served as Director of the Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh. Chopra retired as Principal in 1986, leaving behind a lasting legacy in Indian art and education.

Jagmohan Chopra's arrival at Chandigarh College of Art as Principal was marked by a quiet yet commanding presence- much like a seasoned leader stepping into his role. To us, the students, he exuded an air of authority that made him seem distant.

I was in the midst of my Applied Art course when I had my first real interaction with him, not in his office, but in the verandas of the campus.

Summoning my courage, I approached him and mentioned that we were celebrating the Silver Jubilee of the institute's re-establishment after partition of the country.

He paused, gave me a thoughtful tap on the back, and said, "I know the history, but I wasn't aware it was the Silver Jubilee." Then, fixing his keen gaze on me, he asked, "Do you



know the exact date of its establishment?" Without hesitation, I answered, "16th August, 1951"- a fact that I had learned from my father, S. Sujjan Singh Ji, who had been a Founder Teacher of the institute when it was first established in Shimla.

Chopra nodded, but instead of dwelling on the conversation, he simply said, "Good. Now go, focus on your exams. They're more important right now." A few days later, something unexpected happened.

A notice appeared on the college billboard, congratulating the staff and students on the Silver Jubilee- a gesture straight from him.

To our delight, he even organized a small celebration in the library for the faculty. The peons could be seen walking through the corridors, distributing Ladoos- a simple yet sweet acknowledgment of the occasion.

For a man who seemed distant, this gesture spoke volumes. It was my first glimpse into the thoughtful and observant leader behind the stern exterior- someone who valued history, tradition, and, in his own quiet way, the people around him.

Prof. Jagmohan Chopra played a vital role in advancing printmaking in India, particularly through 'Group 8', a collective he founded in 1968 to foster a community of printmakers. With a cash award he received for his graphic work, he set up a printing press, which became the backbone of the group's collaborative efforts.

'Group 8' significantly contributed to the rise of printmaking, organizing All India Exhibitions exclusively for Graphic Art (1967-68), bringing together both emerging and senior artists like Somnath Hore, K.G. Subramanyan, Arun Bose and Krishna Reddy.

The collective, which included Anupam Sud, Jagdish Dey, Jeevan Adalja, Laxmi Datta, Prasanta Bichitra, Umesh Verma, Vijay Sharma, Yogshakti Chopra, and Surindra Singh Chadha, helped popularize the medium through exhibitions and publications.

Their efforts paralleled other major printmaking hubs such as Garhi and Lalit Kala Studios (New Delhi), Rashtriya Lalit Kala Studio (Lucknow), Bharat Bhavan (Bhopal), Print Studio and Academy of Fine Arts (Mumbai), and Kanoria Centre for Arts (Ahmedabad). Group 8's pioneering work helped establish printmaking as a significant artistic practice in India.

Chopra later helped establish the Indian Printmakers Guild, which played a crucial role in shaping the history of Indian printmaking. Under his guidance and the Group 8 banner, the first All India Print Exhibition was held in

New Delhi in 1979, followed by several others. The Indian Printmakers Guild, formed in 1990 by Delhi's young printmakers, continues to thrive with members like Ananda Moy Banerji, Dattatraya Apte, K R Subbanna, Kanchan Chander and Sukhvinder Singh, among others.

Jagmohan's artistic evolution began with vivid hues, drawing inspiration from neon, mercury, and fluorescent lights of the nocturnal city.

However, he soon moved away from this approach, transitioning towards depictions of rock, stone, and organic formations. His landscapes became barren sanctuaries- empty yet strangely familiar, evoking a sense of timeless ritual. Fossilized remnants in his works suggested the passage of time, echoing the whispers of wind and water.

His paintings captured an inner world- subterranean, drained of water, and eroded by time. Time and transformation were his central themes. His compositions skilfully layered perspectives, blending distant landscapes with close-up details.

The interplay of fresh moss greens and aged stone hues often took on skeletal form- thigh bones, teeth, and totemic fragments.

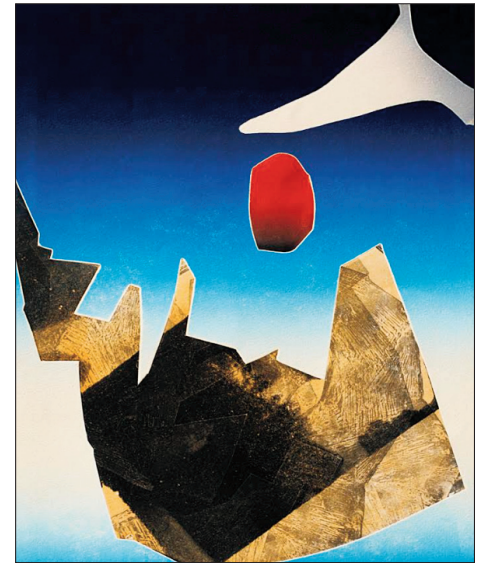
His imagery, at once vast and intimate, conveyed a sense of timelessness, without spatial identity, and even weightlessness, as if suspended in a dreamlike realm beyond the constraints of ordinary perception.

**Participation and Awards:** Jagmohan Chopra actively participated in numerous national and international exhibitions. He held solo shows of paintings and graphics at Delhi Silpi Chakra in 1957 and later in 1961, 1962 and 1968.

He exhibited at prestigious events such as the National Akademi's Exhibition (since 1957), the International Graphic Exhibitions in Yugoslavia (1959) and Poland (1960), the International Graphic Arts Exhibition in Leipzig, Germany (1965), the IX São Paulo Biennale, Brazil (1967), and the 10th International Exhibition of Drawings and Engravings, Lugano, Switzerland (1968).

His works were acquired by notable collectors, including the Earl of Harewood (England), Neville Wadia (Bombay), and the Sudanese Ambassador to India, His Excellency Sayed Abdul Karim Mirghani.

Recognized for his artistic excellence, Chopra received several prestigious awards. These included the Punjab Government's Silver Medal for Best Exhibit in Graphics (1959), First Prize in Watercolour at AIFACS Annual Exhibition (1959), and Honourable Mentions for Graphics at the Bombay Art



Society Exhibition (1959). He won a Silver Medal for Painting at the 1st Jammu & Kashmir Academy Annual Exhibition (1960), a Gold Medal at the First All India Graphic Exhibition (1965, New Delhi), and First Prize in Graphics at AIFACS Annual Exhibitions (1965, 1967).

He was honoured with the National Award by Lalit Kala Akademi (1968). Later, in recognition of his contributions to art and culture, he received the Kala Ratna Award from All India Fine Arts & Crafts Society (AIFACS), New Delhi (1988) and was honoured by the North Zone Cultural Centre, Patiala (1987).

Jagmohan Chopra also played a significant role in art curator and jury panels. He served as a senior juror for numerous national and state-level exhibitions and was a Life Member of AIFACS, New Delhi.

He was actively involved with Delhi Silpi Chakra (as a Member & Secretary from 1962-65) and other art collectives like Get Together and Prints 49.

His contributions continued to be celebrated posthumously, with Prints 49- A Photographic Stroll Around Life & Space exhibited at the Museum of Fine Arts, Panjab University, Chandigarh (2009), and at AIFACS, New Delhi (2009).

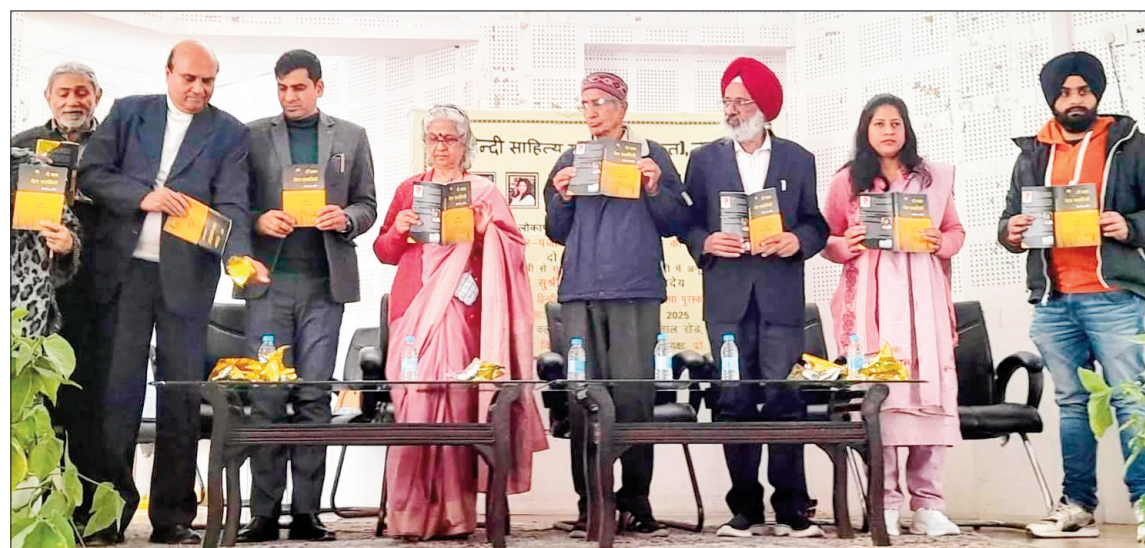
**Jagmohan Chopra's Legacy and Collections:** His artworks are housed in prestigious collections across India and abroad, reflecting his profound impact on the art world. His works can be found in the collections of Earl of Harwood (England), H.E. Sayeed Abdul Karim Mirghani (Ambassador of Sudan in India), Neville Wadia (Bombay), and Kanwal Krishna (Delhi).

His heritage is also preserved in the permanent collections of Lalit Kala Akademi (New Delhi & Hyderabad), Hyderabad State Museum, Panjab University Museum (Chandigarh), and numerous private collections. Prof. Jagmohan Chopra passed away on March 3, 2013, in New Delhi after a prolonged illness. A revered and deeply respected figure in Indian art, he continues to be remembered not only by those who knew him personally but also by admirers of his work.

His contribution to printmaking, photography, and fine arts remains an enduring source of inspiration.

*(The author of this article is former Principal, Government College of Art, Chandigarh; Founder and OSD, National Institute of Design, Kurukshetra; and Author of the Prestigious Book 'History & Heritage- Mayo school's Post- Colonial Cousin in India.)*

## Hindi Translation book 'Do Kam Terah Kahaniyan' by Verman released



Hindi translation book of short stories, titled 'Do Kam Terah Kahaniyan', written by well known artist-writer-journalist Jang S. Verman and translated in Hindi by Saroj Bala, a Hindi & Dogri writer of J&K, was released by Hindi Sahitya Mandal (HSM), Jammu in a function organized at K L Saigal Auditorium, Writers' Club, Jammu on 1st March, 2025. Dr. Raj Kumar, well known Hindi writer was the chief guest on this occasion whereas Dr. Purshotam, Assoc. Prof. Hindi Deptt. JU was present as special guest of the event. Dr. Chanchal Dogra, President HSM, writers Jang S. Verman and Saroj Bala shared the dais. Ms. Sonali Thakur, was honoured with 1st Shanti-Shaligram Post Graduate

Hindi Mega Puraskar- 2024 during the programme. A large number of intellectuals and writers attended the event.

The programme started with the formal welcome by Dr. Chanchal Dogra, President, HSM emphasizing on the activities of HSM and the award initiated by HSM from this year, for the promotion of Hindi language.

She informed that the award has been started by Dr. Chanchal Dev Raj Dogra on the name of her mother-in-law (Late) Smt. Shanti Shaligram. She emphasized on the importance of Hindi language as a means of promotion of national integration.

Earlier, Monto Dutta Sharma, Acting Secretary HSM gave a brief of the programme being organized

during the event of HSM. A paper on the merits and critical evaluation of the released 'Do Kam Terah Kahaniyan', translated version of 'Do Ghatt Terah Kahaniyan' written by Dr. Nirmal Vinod, a multi-lingual writer from Jammu, was presented by Smt. Uma Sharma, Literary Secretary, HSM.

The content of the paper reflected on the merits of the stories of the book and contribution of Verman in the field or literature. Sh. Sanjiv Bhasin, Vice President HSM read out one story from the book in a tone of professional presenter. Sh. Shambihari Juneja read out the detailed introduction of Jang S. Verman. Jang S. Verman gave a brief of his creative journey and influences those inspired him to write short stories. Saroj Bala

and some of the writers also expressed their views on the short stories included in the released book as well as the contribution of Verman at various levels.

Miss Sonali Thakur was awarded with 1st Shanti- Shaligram Post Graduate Hindi Mega Puraskar-2024 for topping Post Graduation Programme of University of Jammu in Hindi.

The award carried cash money of Rs. Eleven Hundred, a memento and a citation which was also read out during the event.

In his address, Dr. Raj Kumar appreciated the fiction work contributed by Sh. Jang S. Verman and his contribution in the fields of art, literature and cultural journalism. He lauded the translation work done by Saroj Bala in a fine spirit of the original fiction work by Verman.

He complimented Jang S. Verman for creating fiction work on the eventualities and situations prevailing in the society and have universal appeal in its content. He added that the short stories are full of ideas, emotions of humanitarian experiences, rich social values. In his address, Dr. Purshotam appreciated the introduction of Shanti-Shaligram PG Hindi Mega Puraskar.

The proceedings of the programme were conducted by Smt. Uma Sharma, Literary Secretary, HSM. The programme ended with vote of thanks by Sh. Rakesh Abrol, Executive Member, HSM.



## Gramaloka organized, Sahitya Akademi Award- Urdu announced

JANG S. VERMAN

Sahitya Akademi organized a Gramaloka Programme at Middle School, Chack Desa in Kathua District. The programme was presided over by the convener Dogri Advisory Board, Sahitya Akademi, Padmshree Mohan Singh. Sh. Kartar Nath Verma, President Vishvakarma Sabha, Kathua was present in the function. Programme was attended by the local people in large and also by teaching staff and students of Middle School, Chack Desa(Kathua).

Gramaloka event is a programme designed in a fashion that poets working in the field very seriously but get lesser opportunities or platforms, are the main targets.

In this Gramaloka programme poets from different places of District Kathua were called to recite their poems in Dogri. The following poets recited their poems: Msrs. Tilak Raj Sumbria; Madam Lal Tufan; Randhir Singh Katal; Saroj Bala and Shashi Kumar.

Dr. K Sreenivasarao, Secretary, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, in a press communication has conveyed that Sh. Madhav Kaushik, President of Sahitya Akademi has approved Sahitya Akademi Puraskar in Urdu- 2024 for Bain-Ul-Uloomi Tanqueed (Criticism; Published: 2019) by Prof. Ateequllah. The book was selected on the basis of recommendation made by the Jury comprising three members in accordance with the rules and procedures laid down for the purpose. The book was selected for the award on majority decision. The names of Jury Members are: Prof. Abdus Samad; Sri Pritpal Singh Betab and Sri. Sheen Kaaf Nizam. The Award in the form of a casket containing an engraved copper plaque and a payment of Rs. 1,00,000/- will be presented to the awardee at a special function to be held on 8th March, 2025 at New Delhi.