

3168 (03)

# A STUDY ON DELHI SILPI CHAKRA



AN  
ABSTRACT  
SUBMITTED TO  
CH. CHARAN SINGH UNIVERSITY, MEERUT  
FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
IN  
**DRAWING & PAINTING**

*Supervisor*

**Dr. Usha Kiran**

Head, Dept. of Fine Arts  
Painting) Meerut College Meerut, U.P.

*Researcher*

**Surksha**

M.A. (Drawing &  
NET-JRF. (Visual Arts)

**DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS  
MEERUT COLLEGE, MEERUT  
Ch. CHARAN SINGH UNIVERSITY, MEERUT  
2019**

## *A Study on Delhi Silpi Chakra*

---


The India's independence from colonial rule might have strengthened the idea of modernism in Indian art. Freedom also brings freedom of expression to every extent of life in India, which leads towards individualistic vision in art ushered in an era of challenge as well as transgression in art. The so-called artists of transition for instance seem to be engrossed in a contemplation of simpler pursuits of the everyday life. Perhaps it was a way of suggesting that now that the overriding objective had been attained, it was time to savor the pure sense of being alive. The immediate post-independence era saw the maturing of a number of talented artists, whom. Jaya Appasamy calls 'artist in transition.' Artist such as Sailoz Mukherjea, N.S. Bendre, K.K. Hebbar, Shiavax Chavda and K.H. Ara exuded a sense of joy in their expressionism, focusing on the lyrical nature of line, simplified forms and outburst of bright colours.

After independence art scene in India changed drastically. "The changing pattern of the India coupled with the changing norms of aesthetic vision in art. Art is unfolding of a vision, a reality which has its own independent existence. In the formation of the independent reality having its cohesiveness and cognition, perhaps, various expressions come into play simultaneously. It is futile to analyse whether these experience spring from the figurative, recognizable forms of nature or they are inspired by the cumulative synthetic image of experiences abstracted into a world of fancy"

During 1930's and 1940's number of theatre professional, writers and visual artist joined together under the banner of 'progressives'. Taking the inspiration from progressive writers in 1947, Progressive Artist Group (PAG) was formed by F.N. Souza, S.H. Raza, K.H. Ara, M.F. Hussain, H.A. Gade and S.K. Bakre in Bombay. The formation of the progressive artist group was defining impetus and momentum to the modern Indian painting.

In 1951, PAG artists did a joint exhibition with the artists of Calcutta Group in Calcutta. This exhibition was well received by artists alike Ramkinkar Baij, Pradosh Das Gupta and others. In the same year, S.H. Raza went to Paris on French government scholarship to study painting; S.K. Bakre and F.N. Souza leave the India to settle down in London. After Souza and Raza, he was the H.A. Gade with Ara and Hussain, looks after the group's activities and annual exhibition at the Bombay Art Society Salon till 1954.

In a meantime, Indian artists began a quest for their individual styles, bringing forward innovative ideas and new techniques. Delhi Silpi Chakra (DSC) group emerged in 1949, as a post partition phenomenon a number of artists from the Lahore art school migrated

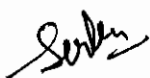


to Delhi. It was a time of confusion and trauma and the artists felt the need to be self-reliance. They also continued the quest for a national style of expression, turning to local craft traditions for inspiration in this direction. The members of DSC group came together in the tumultuous year of India's Independence, 1947, in its new capital, New Delhi. Its founder senior sculptor teacher B.C. Sanyal left Lahore for Delhi during Partition and several members were refugees. As a break way faction from the All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society (AIFACS), the group was formed in 1949, on the principle beliefs of a greater meeting between the artists and writers, and that art had to come closer to the people famously, they brought art exhibitions to the lanes of Delhi's Chandni Chowk and Karol Bagh. The founder artists of DSC are (1) B.C. Sanyal, (2) Kanwal Krishna, (3) K.S. Kulkarni, (4) Dhanraj Bhagat and (5) P.N. Mago, and they were joined in later years by artists such as (6) Harikshan Lall, (7) Satish Gujral, (8) K.C. Aryan, (9) Devayani Krishna, (10) Dinkar Kowshik, (11) Jaya Appasamy, (12) Ram Kumar, (13) Damyanti Chawla, (14) Prabha Rastogi, (15) Avinash Chandra, (16) Kewal Soni, (17) Mohinder Kaur, (18) Bishamber Khanna, (19) Rajesh Mehra, (20) Paramjit Singh, (21) Jagmohan Chopra, (22). Raj Jain, (23) Nand Katyal, (24) Rameshwar Broota (25) Krishna Ahuja (26) Jagdesh Dey and (27) Santosh Jain. The Silpi Chakra group interacted actively with artists and continued operating well by the 1960s.

DSC recognised that the art of the nation must express the soul of its people and must ally with the process of progress. In the terms of marketing, the DSC took up innovative means to market Modern Indian Art. In 1949 the 'Chakra' held its first exhibition at barracks of the Masonic Lodge at Janpath which made a great impact on the art scene in the capital. Since this initial foray, the Chakra held exhibitions and programmes and discussions regularly which maintained a discipline with the diligent creators and artists (Grewal. 2018).

To propagate contemporary art, DSC members organised exhibitions of their works in 'Mohallas' such as Chandni Chowk, Karol Bagh and the University campus 1949 and 1950. There was a good response from the public. Paintings were sold to university teachers, doctors, lawyers, writers, actors and musicians and widened the base. The B.C. Sanyal recalls in his article in the catalogue 'Delhi Silpi Chakra -The Early Years (1998)' that those who could not afford a straight purchase a hire-purchase scheme was also offered. This enlarged the circle of patrons and the Chakras' vibrancy existed till the mid in the 1960s.

P.N. Mago conducted a meeting with B.C. Sanyal, Kanwal Krishna, K.S. Kulkarni, Dhanraj Bhagat and other artist members of AIFACS, who sat on the fence. When this failed, it was decided to place certain resolutions at the next general body meeting of AIFACS,

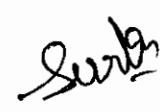
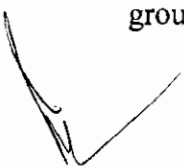


demanding more representation for working artists on various committees and more meaningful programmes and facilities for the uplift of art and the artist. But the General body meeting of AIFACS in March, 1949 overflowed with people unconnected with art, and none of the resolutions moved by us went through. One of the resolutions contained a recommendation to the government to consider the newly established All India Association of Fine Arts of Mumbai as the Central or national organization for the sustenance and promotion of Indian arts. Kekko Gandhi, the Secretary of the Association, had flown in the Delhi to muster support for the resolution. Outnumbered, we found ourselves helpless in the fold of AIFACS. Hence, Kanwal Krishna, K.S. Kulkarni and P.N. Mago, who were then the members of the Council of the AIFACS (1948-49), submitted our resignations on the spot and went on to lay the foundation of the DSC. After facing the difficulties in starting period it was founded on 25th March, 1949 by the three of us, together with Dhanraj Bhagat and B.C. Sanyal (who was elected first Chairman of the group). Other who joined soon after including Devayani Krishna, Harkrishan Lall, Satish Gujral, Ram Kumar, K.C. Aryan, Damayanti Chawla, Dinkar Kowshik, Jaya Appasamy, Prabha Rastogi (nee Loknath), Srinivas Pandit, Dwarka Dish and Brij Mohan Bhanot etc.

Apart from this, the DSC with its motto '*Art illuminates Life*', made a promising start in its manifesto, the Chakra declared "The group recognises that art as an activity must not be separate from life; that the art of a nation must express the soul of its people and art lovers with the forces of progress. The group recognise artists had to come together to work towards the progress of art and help to build a virile national culture and brighter life in the country" (Mago, 1998). The membership of DSC was restricted to working artists, but writers, musicians, poets, critics and dramatists who shared the Chakra's views were welcomed to associate with its activities and art works.

The study concerned with the following research objectives:

1. To explore the artistic vision of DSC with reference to Indian contemporary art.
2. To explore the artist's contribution to DSC group.
3. To search the trends of modernity in paintings of DSC.
4. To analyse the paintings or artworks of founder artists of DSC.
5. To explore the paintings of DSC with reference to theme, style, medium and techniques used in paintings or artworks.
6. To find out the different symbols and stories in paintings or artworks of DSC group.



The collection of news shows that the group was more active and the members of the group exhibited their work time-to-time. Number of exhibitions exhibited for development of DSC. Some of major news clips published on the basis of various exhibitions which shows that the contribution of group members artists. The news published in various newspapers such as The Statesman (1949, March 12). DSC exhibition. New Delhi. The Indian News Chronical (1949, November 13), The Statesman (1951, April 11), The Statesman (1951, October 7), The Hindustan Times (1957, February 23), The Statesman (1957, February 23), The Hindustan Times (1957, March 18), The Indian Express (1958, December 12), The Indian Express (1962, April 7), The Sunday Statesman (1962, April 8), The Sunday Statesman (1962, April 22), Thought (1962, April 28), The Statesman (1963, December 3), Thought (1963, December 7), The Hindustan Times (1964, February 2), The Sunday Standard (1964, February 2), The Hindustan Times (1964, February 3), The Statesman (1965, March 31), The Statesman (1967, February 24), The Statesman (1967, February 24 link), The Hindustan Times (1967, February 24), The Indian Express (1967, February 25), and The Pinoneer (2013, October 26).

The spirit of research study is to analyze some significant paintings of DSC with reference to theme, style, medium, and technique used in paintings. The details of famous paintings of founder artists of DSC has been analyzed in chapter-5. The list of analyzed paintings as: Painting No. 1.1: At the Nizamuddin Fair, Painting No. 1.2: Untitled [Sun Rise], Painting No. 1.3: Refugee Family, Painting No. 1.4: Untitled [Farmer], Painting No. 1.5: Untitled [Mountain], Painting No. 2.1: Tibet, Painting No. 2.2: In the Mountain, Painting No. 2.3: Shivering Mountain, Painting No. 2.4.: War Painting Series, Painting No. 2.5: Crucifixion, Painting Analysis of K.S. Kulkarni, Painting No. 3.1: Untitled [Cubistic], Painting No. 3.2: Untitled [Farmer Ploughing], Painting No. 3.3: Untitled [Man & Woman], Painting No. 3.4: Girl with Pitcher, Painting No. 3.5.: Village Maiden, Sculpture No. 4.1: Horse Series, Sculpture No. 4.2: Family Horse, Painting No. 4.3: Untitled [Women Playing her Child], Sculpture No. 4.4: Despair, Sculpture No. 4.5: Rajasthani Women, Painting No. 5.1: Drummers, Painting No. 5.2: Rice Planters, Painting No. 5.3: Farewell, Painting No. 5.4: Moon Light, and Painting No. 5.5: Mourners.

### **Contribution of Artists to Delhi Silpi Chakra**

(1) **B.C. Sanyal (1902-2003):** Rajan Babu (1940), Amba (1950), Chinese Painter (1950), Courtyard (1950), Gole Market (1950), Monkey (1950), Toliet (1950), Nizamuddin (1952), Girl and the Moon (1960), Chandhamadan and Hanuman (1978), Untitled, Ink on



paper (1983), Untitled, Oil on canvas (1985), Untitled [mountain] (1996), Untitled, Mixed media on paper (1996), Untitled, water colour on paper (1996), Landscape (n.d.), Refugee family (n.d.), Untitled [Village seen] (n.d.), Untitled. Graph print on paper (n.d.), Untitled. Water colour on paper (n.d.). (2) **Kanwal Krishna (1910-1993)**: Tibet (1939), War painting series (1948), Kashmir war (1949), Kawarias, water carriers (1949), Crucifixion (1950), Holy city (1950), Shivering mountain (1950), Norway Landscape (1952), Spirit of the unknown (1954), Cave monastery (1956), Afloat (n.d.), In the mountain (n.d.). Untitled. Water colour spray on paper (n.d.). (3) **K.S. Kulkarni (1916-1994)**: Untitled [farmer ploughing] (1950), Bull fight (n.d.), Chod (n.d.), Couple (n.d.), Girl with pitcher (n.d.), Mask (n.d.), Scare-crow on the fields (n.d.), Village maiden (n.d.) Untitled, Mixed media on paper (n.d.), Untitled, Oil on canvas (n.d.), Acrylic on board (n.d), Untitled. Oil on canvas (n.d.) etc. (4) **Dhanraj Bhagat (1917-1988)**: Untitled [women playing her child] (1949), Despair (1953), Horses series (1953), Veena player (1953), Standing figure (1957), Mother earth (1957), Flute player (1958), Rajasthani women (1960), Image-III (1971), Shell-I (1971), Sprit of work (n.d.). (5) **Pran Nath Mago (1923-2006)**: Drummers (1923), Farewell (1945), Three sisters (1984), Moon light (1949), Mourners (1950), Rice Planters (1952), Unemployed (1958), Catching fish (n.d.), Mar Canal (n.d.), Rumours (n.d.), Siesta (n.d.) etc. (6) **Harkrishan Lall (1921-2000)**: Melons for Market (1940), Merry go round (1940), Lake palace-udaipur (1950), Rudra prayag (1951), City Scape-Udaipur (1961), Sunset (n.d.), Village in pangi (n.d.). (7) **Satish Gujral (1925-2020)**: Morning in Mass (1948), Days of glory, Oil (1948-48), Days of Glory, Lithograph (1952), Playmates (1952), Snare of memories (1952), Self-portrait, Oil on board (1954), Self-portrait, Oil on paper (1956), Desolation (1956), Despair (n.d.), Tyranny (n.d.) and Hero (n.d.). (8) **K.C. Aryan (1919-2002)**: Parrot seller (1951), Top Player (1952), Acrobats (1953), Jhatka (1953), Drawing water (1953), Jhatka (1953), Nayika awaiting her lover (1953), The flute player (1953), Women washing hair (1953), Bull (1958), Construction-II (1959) and Construction-I (n.d.). (9) **Devayani Krishana (1910-2000)**: Tabla Player (1950), Elephant (1954), Lion (1954), Mask (1954), Mother and Child (1954), Underwater (1988), Allah series (n.d.), Still life (n.d.) and Untitled, mixed media on paper (1995). (10) **Kinkar Kowshik (1918-2011)**: Woman with a basket (1954), Morning (1955), Drummer (1955), Playing children (1982), Kite flying (1989), Yo Yo Player (1989), The top player (1990), Boat man (n.d.), Lifting veli (n.d.), Pahari man under umbrella (n.d.) and Woman with tanpura (n.d.). (11) **Jaya Apasamy (1918-1984)**: Drayad in autumn (1958), Garland (n.d.), Mountains (n.d.), Untitled; (1963) and Untitled, oil on canvas (n.d.). (12) **Ram Kumar (1924-2018)**: Boy (1962), Town (n.d.),

Banaras Scene (n.d.), Variation on the Theme of the City (n.d.), Landscape (n.d.) and Untitled, Acrylic on paper (2006). (13) **Damyanti Chawla (1920-2004)**: Paris-I (1971), Untitled (1963), Self Portrait (1950), Chamba Girl (1940) and Garden Scene (n.d.). (14) **Prabha Rastogi (1926)**: Holi facilitations (1949), Funeral procession (1956), Self-portrait (1950). (15) **Avinash Chandra (1931-1991)**: Mall at Night (Simla, n.d.), Tomb (n.d.), Painting (1959), Golden light (n.d.), Painting (n.d.), Trees (n.d.) and Under the Sea (1965). (16) **Kewal Soni (1926)**: Sculpture No. 1. (1973), Sculpture No. 2. (n.d.); and Sculpture No. 1. (17) **Mohinder Kaur (1927)**: Village Scene (1958). (18) **Bishamber Khanna (1930-2000)**: Lake (1958), Boats (1959), Houses & Boats (1960), Composition (1960), House in sun (1960), and Trees (1960), Enamel painting (1993-95), and Untitled, Enamel on cooper (n.d.). (19) **Rajesh Mehra (1932)**: Garden Scene (1960), Cow and the Boy (1957), Rendezvous (1957), Dead Calf (1957), The Lonely Lot, (1961), Man and Beast (1961), Rendezvous (1957), and Turbulant Tree (1957). (20) **Paramjeet Singh (1935)**: Article on memories of DSC (2014). An interview on Delhi Silpi Chakara (Dec. 2016). (21) **Jagmohan Chopra (1935-2013)**: Lion cut (1967) and Composition (1967). (22) **Raj Jain (1931)**: The man and Paper (2002). Participated in 'Re-wheeling the Chakra; A Delhi Silpi Chakra Retrospective (2013). (23) **Nand Katyal (1935)**: Stones and River Ganges Harsil-3 (n.d.) and Turmoil in the City Delhi (n.d.). (24) **Rameshwar Broota (1941)**: Untitled, Acrylic on canvas (2004). (25) **Krishna Ahuja (1943)**: Biography of a soul (1970), Couples (1970) and An interview on Delhi Silpi Chakara (Dec. 2016). (26) **Jagdish Dey (1942)**: I Construction J-3 Etching (1970), I construction J-2 Etching (1970). (27) **Santosh Jain**: Who is there (1979).

## References

- Aryan, S. (2014). K.C. Aryan and Delhi silpi chakra. In S. Tagore (Ed.), *Delhi silpi chakra: The progressive artists group of Delhi*. 10 (42), 26-35. New Delhi: Art & Deal.
- Bhagat, D. (1949). Untitled. [Women playing her child]. Pen, ink and oil on paper. 6.6×9.5 Inch. (16.8×24.1 cm.) S/d in English 'Bhagat 49' 1.1 source <http://osianama.com>.
- Krishna, K. (1939). Tibet. Water colour on paper, 8.2×11.7 in./20.8×29.7 cm. Coll. Kanwal Krishna.
- Kulkarni, K.S. (n.d.). Village Maiden. Acrylic on canvas on board, 22.0×30.0 in./56.0×76.2 cm. Image Courtesy: Great Banyan Art. Retrieved form; <http://www.greatbanyanart.com/art-detail.php?productID=186>.
- Mago, P.N. (2017). Contemporary Art of India: A Perspective'. [Re-print 2017]. Trans. New Delhi: National Book Trust, p. 11.
- Sanyal, A. (2014). Memory of a valiant effort. In S. Tagore (Eds.), *Delhi silpi chakra: The progressive artists group of Delhi*. 10 (42), 60-63. New Delhi: Art & Deal.

\*\*\*\*\*

