



ARTISTS WHO CREATED ART MOVEMENTS IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract:

This article is intended to document the development of art of painting and contributions of the Pakistani artists in this field who chose the profession of teaching art. They influenced the later generations of the artists in Pakistan the most in contrast to the legendary artists like Chughtai and Allah Bukhsh. At the inception of Pakistan, artists like Allah Bukhsh and Abdur Rehman Chughtai were struggling with the unpromising political and economic conditions of a newly born country. These pioneer artists were not able to evolve any particular school of Pakistani art. They were all masters of their own individual styles. The generation of artists of 1960s, 70s and 80s were working on various themes of their own interests and receiving influences from all over the world, especially from the western side because of the pedagogical efforts of those artists who were trained in the western institutes. Among those artists Anna Molka Ahmad, Shakir Ali, Colin David and Khalid Iqbal were the inspiring teachers who shaped the art scene in Pakistan.

As the result of Anna Molka Ahmed's enormous contribution in founding fine arts in Pakistan, many artists adopted a 'German Expressionistic' style of painting following the precepts of Edward Munch (1863-1944), which in turn derive from a Dutch Post-impressionist painter Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890). Shakir Ali synthesized a 20th century cubist style with the elongated forms of Modigliani (1887-1920) and gave birth to a group of followers of abstract ideas of the west. In the presence of these two immense influences Khalid Iqbal and Colin David were successful in making a space for an academic style of realism. So in the last decade of 20th century Pakistani artists were probing their identity among these three major influences: Expressionism, Abstraction and Realism.

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Today in Pakistan we find the art in a robust form. Because of the contributions of devoted art teachers like Anna Molka Ahmad, Shakir Ali, Khalid Iqbal and Colin David who survived the most difficult time of partition of the sub-continent and left behind an enormous amount of work as guidelines and vocabulary for their students. They were also dedicated teachers of Art in contrast to the legendary artists, like Abdur Rehman Chughtai and Allah Bukhsh, inherited by the people of Pakistan at the time of the birth of this country.

In 1947, at the inception of Pakistan, only a few artists were struggling with the unpromising political and economic conditions of the newly born country. There were a few artists active in West Pakistan and some others in the province of the Punjab. Only two art institutions were inherited by Pakistan and both were based in Lahore (a capital city of Punjab province): the Mayo school of art, (now known as National College of Arts) and the Fine Arts Department of the Punjab University (now College of Art and Design). They can rightly claim to have produced many practicing artists and the bulk of women art teachers who are today in charge of the art departments in the several educational institutions throughout Pakistan.

Abdur Rehman Chughtai and Allah Bukhsh were considered the most prominent artists of the pre and post independence period of Pakistan. The works of these pioneer artists were considered of high caliber. “Abdul Rehman Chughtai was influenced by the orientalist style of Bengal School. He created romantic paintings that came out of various traditions, including Persian miniature and Art Nouveau” (Ali 2004). Basically he was a figure painter who portrayed idealized figures from “Mughal history, Hindu gods and goddesses, Buddhist subjects as well as portraits of Punjabi farmers, Kashmiri peasants, Bengali boat people, and Madrasi maidens”

(Nesom 2004, 23) in his own lyrical and poetic style using transparent water colours.(Figure 1) Glow of his colours remained unparalleled. He left behind an enormous number of works. His 2000 paintings are preserved in the A. R. Chughtai Museum in Lahore.

Ustad Allah Buksh born in 1895 was also the most prolific and versatile artist during early days of Pakistan. He started his career as a backdrop painter associated with a theater in Calcutta in 1914 and later on joined Lala Ram Lal studio in Bombay from 1915-19, where he used to replicate *Karishna*'s images in oil paintings commissioned by wealthy Hindu merchants of that period. He developed his style of landscape painting "observing the collection of western paintings on Indian subjects in the Patiala State during the period he was attached to the Maharaja's court around 1937-8". (Naqvi, 1998, 101) Before partition he painted many Hindu myths and legends, and *Karishna* became his favorite subject. He always captured the scenes from his indigenous surroundings embedded with local Indian themes in western manners. After partition of India, being a local resident of Lahore city he intentionally changed his subject matter into the life of Punjabi villagers and folk stories of the Punjab and produced the most significant works in Pakistan. (Figure 2) Akbar Naqvi cited Chughtai's statement about this self taught artist that "Allah Buksh did not inspire Lahore intellectuals because of his social position as a sign painter and later a bazaar painter". (Naqvi 1998, 106) Moreover according to Marcella Nesom contributing in his own way to the art scene of Pakistan he could inspire only a few painters like Jimmy Engineer, Shahbaz Khan and his grandson Abdul Majeed. She further explains:

"There are, however, numerous paintings signed by him of inferior accomplishment. This, along with infatuation with abstraction and the attention directed towards newcomers who espoused a modern mode, detracted from the contribution of Allah Buksh." (Nesom 2004, 38)

This way “first modern Muslim artist of south Asia Abdur Rehman Chughtai” (Dadi 2010, 7) and Allah Bukhsh remained unparalleled in their style of art making without inspiring the younger generation and unfortunately, not a single school after their styles came into existence in Pakistan during the 1960s, 70s and 80s. Several reasons can be traced to understand this kind of generation gap among the artist community in Pakistan.

One of the reasons can be explained that their themes were no longer relevant after the inception of Pakistan in 1947 when hoards of Muslim migrated from India into the region now Pakistan, where the political and socio-economic condition were at their confused point. At that time, everyone was hectically making efforts for their own survival. Art basically is linked with the aesthetic sensibility of a human being and flourish in peace and prosperity. Under these circumstances with little resources for art education there was a little chance for the progress and development of Art in Pakistan. (Peshkin 2010, 12-20) One must also remember that the professions that of art was, and still is considered among the lowly professions in Pakistan and parents do not allow their children to join this profession. Another possible reason for the sad state of art education was the masters, like Abdur Rehman Chughtai, were reluctant to hand over their technique and method of art to the younger generation or share their ideas or concepts with them. Dr. Muhammad Saleem wrote a very comprehensive chapter about the art of Chughtai in his book. He said:-

“Unfortunately Chughtai kept his art like a mystery, he neither learnt nor taught his art and techniques to any other person. His style started from himself and ended within himself. He was not interested to set a particular school of art or to extend his ideas.” (Saleem 2005, 98)

Saleem quoted an incident from the writing of Agha Babar to make his point

"once I asked him, do you have any student? He said fervently, many students came and left. Once a man took his son and left him for learning art from me. The boy was himself interested to learn about my art. In one year I taught him how to prepare the ink. His father came and took him

after saying that if I sent my child to a workshop of bicycles for one year, he must be able to earn at least fifty rupees per month". (Saleem 2005, 98)

This incident shows that Chughtai was incapable of sustained teaching efforts. As a result the constrained atmosphere for the new generation of artists, the political chaos, the lack of educational facilities, the lack of earning potential and the reluctant behavior of the master painters themselves toward the spread of their art techniques and styles are reasons of people's lack of stimulation toward the work of those legendary artists. That's why artists like Allah Buksh or Chughtai did not evolve a chain of their art style in the next generation. It is a fact that art can only grow in prosperity when people are wealthy whereas the Pakistani people are still combating with their economic conditions.

In that state of affairs the next generations of 1960s, 70s and 80s were developing various themes of their own interests and receiving influences from all over the world especially from the west. Several of them got a chance of study art in Europe especially at Slade School of Art in London. It was this generation of Pakistani artists, with direct influence from the western world, became the art teachers in prominent art institutions like Punjab University Fine Arts department and National College of Art. These artists got a chance of playing their role as art teachers and left an unavoidable mark of the western influences on the younger generation of artists in Pakistan. Among those the prominent art teachers were Anna Molka Ahmad, Shakir Ali, Khalid Iqbal and Colin David.

Consequently after Anna Molka Ahmad's enormous contribution to encourage fine arts in Pakistan many artists obtained her 'German Expressionistic style of painting. Using a palette knife rather than a brush she introduced a style derived from Edward Munch (1863-1944) and the Dutch Post-impressionist painter Vicent van Gogh (1853-1890). (Raḥmani 2000, 110) “Her

early education was from St Martin's School and later on got scholarship to the Royal college of Arts. In 1940 she came to Lahore with her husband Sheikh Ahmad from Europe. Sheikh Ahmad became the Vice Principal of Mayo school of Arts and she joined Fine arts department of the university of the Punjab" (Naqvi 1998, 179) She was a painter as well as a sculptor. She painted portraits, nude figure paintings and landscapes from her surroundings. (Figure 3)

Moreover she was a dedicated teacher she served the Fine Arts Department singlehandedly during a long period of depression right after the inception of this country. Aftermath of the great migration from Pakistan to India brought forth a situation that "only five Muslim women students left in the department of Fine Arts" (Hashmi 2002, 15) of the University of the Punjab Lahore. "She encouraged students of other women colleges for studies in art and she began this department again with the admission of 21 students. The faculty occasionally supplemented by visiting lecturers, but Anna Molka was the sole permanent pedagogue." (Hashmi 2002, 17) She was committed and dedicated to teach art as a result "she influenced a whole generation of women painters". (Ali 2000, 40)

Anwar Afzal, Abbasi Akhter Abidi, Mrs Zakia Malik, Miss Naseem Hafeez Qazi and Jamila Zaidi were among the early associates and students of Anna Molka. Following the British academic style of Anna Molka's teaching of drawing, painting and sculpture they all became the prominent art teachers. (Hashmi 1994)

Marcella Nesom compares her presence with the complementary existence of Shakir Ali and writes:

"She was the ideological counterbalance to Shakir Ali. Her students painted realism, from life, whereas Shakir's students espoused the abstract and focused on mental imagery. With the exception of some of the National College of Arts professors, most of the men and women who

have taught art in Lahore or who have been heads of departments of art colleges in Lahore have at sometimes been her students.” (Nesom 2006, 49)

Apart from her students Muhammad Asim Amjad appeared in a four men show at Ejaz Gallery Lahore in 2004 with an unmistakable stamp of influence from Anna Molka Ahmad's expressionistic strokes of palette knife. (Figure 4) His figures, his colors and his subjects are all examples of the very direct influence of Anna Molka.

Shakir Ali emerged as the counterbalance to the Anan Molka Ahmad's British academic style in Pakistan. “Equipped with both the knowledge of eastern and western art, he went to Europe to study at Slade School of Arts London for three years from 1946-49”. (Wille 2015, 19) Enjoying and watching people and places and drawing and sketching birds and flowers in Paris and Prague he developed the significant motifs of birds, flowers and sun which appeared in his works under a specific content. Those visits left an enormous impact on his style of painting as well as on the development of concepts behind his artistic endeavors. Shakir Ali acknowledged this fact in an interview and said, “I used to go to draw the live Baroque birds to the Prague Zoological Gardens; I made my first bird sketches in Prague and they and flowers have never left me since” (Marek 1967, 113)

He also joined Andre Lhote's art school in Paris for several months. There he learned through the intensive studies of cubism. Simone Wille explains in his book:

“Lhote adhered to cubism, he_ attracted artists from many parts of the world. There are numerous records of artists from all over the world taking part in Lhote's school, including _ Brazilian artist_ Iranian artist Jalil Ziapour who must have been at Lhote's school around the time Shakir Ali was there.”

At his arrival back to Pakistan in 1956 he shared with his colleagues and students his synthesis of cubism and elongated forms of Modigliani (1887-1920) which he developed during his days in the west. His expedition and mental wanderings through history became the source of

maturity in his style and subject matter. His still lifes, floral motifs, boats, bulls and human figures, particularly female in amorous state were painted in cubist manners. (Figure 5) He became a professor at the Mayo School of Art and later on promoted as principal in 1961 (Wille 2015, 23). Being a teacher his potential to manipulate the art scene in Pakistan was unlimited. He got a special opportunity to influence the young artists of Lahore. "His social and friendly nature brought him near to a group of young painters who were searching for means to express their personal and unique mode of existence." (Hassan 1991, 56) A new horizon of thinking in abstract manner was opened in the history of Art in Pakistan by Shakir Ali. He trained a number of Pakistani artists and made "cubism" synonymous with "Modern" and "progressive" and highly influenced the later generation of Pakistani artists. (Syed, and Abdullah 2015, 38)

Prominent artists of the later period showed a great influence from Shakir Ali. Among them were Ali Imam, Moen Najmi, Sheikh Safdar, Ahmed Pervez, Anwar Jalal Shemza, Qutub Sheikh and Raheel Akber Javed. "They did not show much appreciation for the work of Abdul Rehman Chughtai and Ustad Allah Bux, as being old-fashioned and lagging behind the spirit of the times." (Mughees 2014, 6) "Shakir not only influenced but also subtly guided painters like Shemza, Ahmed Pervez, Safdar, Moen Najmi, Ali Imam and many others by his views and philosophical discourses on modern art".(Mughees 2014)

His discussions and encouragement to the students to learn art through the modern theories and his own westernized style of painting turned out to be a support or foundation for the artists of the future. The generation of 70s brought forth the names of Zahaorul Ikhlaiq and Jamil Naqsh with a profound influence from Shakir's modernism. Zahaorul Ikhlaiq developed a school of formal experimentations which transformed the Pakistani modernism into a new stage "reevaluating, revisiting and reexamining a number of eastern traditions together with a segment

of western modernism” (Wille 2015, 40) . His successful blend of modernism and regional traditions (Figure 6) opened up new possibilities for the younger generations. Apart from Zahoorul Ikhlāq the art works of Bashir Mirza and Jamil Naqsh shared a wider range of influences from Shakir Ali's simplified abstraction. (Figure 7&8)

In the presence of the two immense influences Anna Molka Expressionism and Shakir Ali's Abstraction **Khalid Iqbal** and **Colin David** were successful in making a ground for academic style of realism. Both artists were graduates of the Slade School of Art London and were teachers at National College of Arts in Lahore.

Khalid Iqbal was in Slade School for three years between 1953 and 56. There he did a few landscapes along with the figure drawing and portrait practice. “His landscapes were admired by the English painter John Piper who praised the painter’s feel for the places he had painted”. (Naqvi 1998, 555) He was not experimenting with bold colours nor proved to be an innovator. His paintings reflected the observation of his natural surroundings in more subtle manners. “His realism was not of Courbet, nor of Millet and Constable _ it was Cezanne for whom he confessed the great respect” (Naqvi 1998, 546) Though he has followed Cezanne but not all the way his style was inclined to the fragmentary brushstrokes or cubical structures. After teaching few years in the Punjab University he joined National College of Arts and soon became Head of Fine Arts department there on Shakir Ali’s promotion as a principal.

Khalid Iqbal's landscapes provided a true guideline and encouragement toward outdoor paintings for a new generation of landscape painters. His work gains perspective through colours and brush strokes. Many familiar places around the Lahore city can be observed in his paintings. (Figure 9) Zulqarnain Haider strongly influenced by Khalid Iqbal's early morning mists, the sun

flooded after noons, deep evening shadows and mood or atmosphere in the nature. (Figure 10)
After Zulqarnain Haider, Nazir Ahmad and Abid Khan came up with the same tendencies of landscape paintings. (Figure 11)

On the other hand Colin David constructed compositions around the human figures especially females. He was a competent painter who formed human anatomy with skill and imagination. His paintings developed a kind of contrast between the simplicity or abstract forms and the beauty and sensuality of female figures. (Figure 12) “Colin David’s paintings were meant to administer a double shock one of the corporeal abundance of the nude and the other of the abstract sparseness of the design” (Naqvi 1998, 576) As a teacher he left an enormous influence of his style on the students who learned figure drawing and composition from him at National College of Arts. His 1980’s exhibition in Karachi presented nudes with faces turned away from the viewer. This particular phenomenon with turned faces later on appeared in the nude life drawings and paintings of **R M Naeem**. (Figure 13) He absorbed this kind of imagery during his drawing practice as a student under the guidelines of Colin David at National College of Arts. After him **Ali Azmat**’s isolated figures also reflect an inclination towards Colin David’s single figure compositions, not as a student but as a follower of the particular subject of human form. (Figure 14)

In the last decade of 20th century the young artists were probing their identity among the three major influences the Expressionism, the Abstraction and the Realism. With the passage of time, the art scene in Pakistan has expanded through art education and the establishment of new art institutions, more artists with new ideas came into existence. In 90s, Karachi established four well- known private art institutions Karachi Art School, Central Institute of Art and Craft, the North City Art School and the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture. Many colleges and

Universities in Lahore started Art departments. Smaller art centers by artists established in both Lahore and Karachi.

In the last decade, the activities of visual art have flourished in Pakistan in a noticeable manner. The creative ideas of the young generation of artists in Pakistan are exhibited and sold for large sums. The young artists reflect many influences from their pioneers, their heritage and inspirations from many western trends of modern art or other civilizations.

All the progress in this field is based on the firm art trainings provided by the devoted art teachers Anna Molka Ahmad, Shakir Ali, Khalid Iqbal and Colin David and because of the establishment of new art societies, art institute, art departments in colleges and universities throughout the country.

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Painting by Abdul Rehman Chughtai

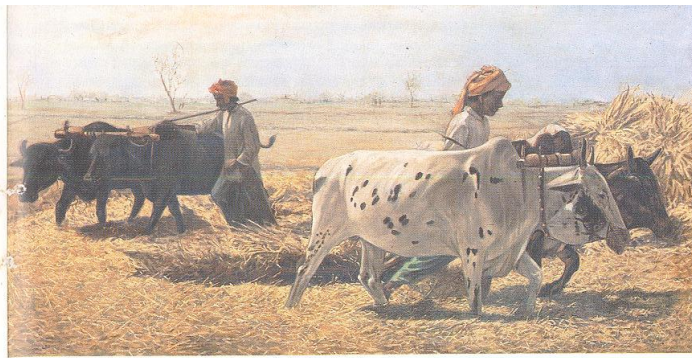


Figure No. 2 Painting by Allah Bukhsh

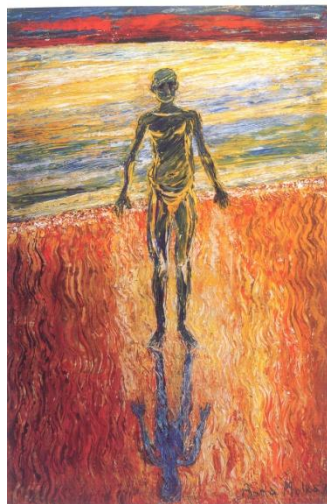


Figure No. 3 Painting by Anna Molka Ahmad



Figure No. 4 Painting by Asim Amjad

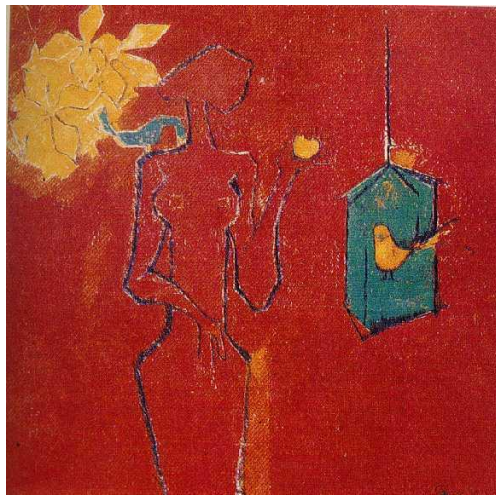


Figure No. 5 Painting by Shakir Ali

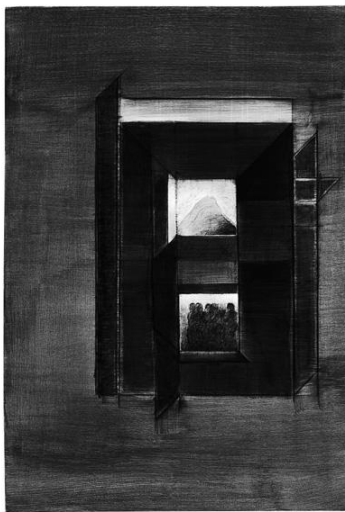


Figure No. 6 Painting by Zahoorul Ikhlāq



Figure No. 7 Painting by Bashir Mirza



Figure No. 8 Painting by Jamil Naqsh



Figure No. 9 Painting by Khalid Iqbal



Figure No. 10 Painting by Zulqarnain Haider



Figure No. 11 Painting by Abid Khan



Figure No. 12 Painting by Colin David

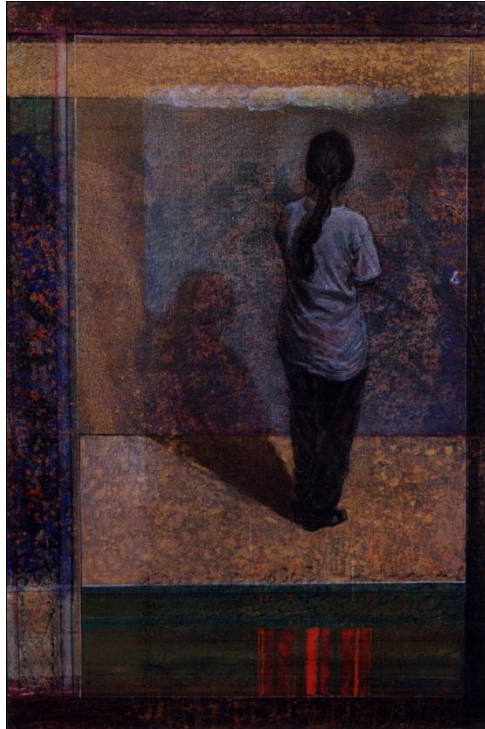


Figure No. 13 Painting by RM Naeem



Figure No. 14 Painting by Ali Azmat