

Muhammad Jāved

A Versatile Artist

An Elaborated
Disquisition

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Biography of Muḥammad Jāved

There are numerous artists in Pakistan but most of them have limited vision in the field of arts. However, Muḥammad Jāved is one of those who rises above the mainstream (Fig.08). He has shown his multiple visions in various renditions of arts. This chapter explains Muḥammad Jāved's long journey to become an artist and his intellectual life.



Fig. 08: *Muḥammad Jāved*

Humble Beginning

Muḥammad Jāved, son of Qāsim 'Alī, was born on 3rd July 1942 in a village Malliān Kālān district Sheikhūpūra. The village proves to be significant as there were twelve milliān in the district of Sheikhūpūra. Among these Milliān Kalān was the biggest hamlet and functioning as the center of agricultural activities. Before partition Sardār Jān Pāul was one of the leading agriculturists of this area. Being a neighbour Jāved's father had a good relation with Sardār Jān Pāul who was running a business at very diminutive scale. His mother Ghulām Fāṭima was house-wife but she was very anxious about the education of her son.

He was born in a Rajput family. His grandfather was a well-known figure in the village and his great grandfather was in British Army during British rule. For this his family had prominent place in Milliān Kalān. Jāved spent his childhood in his native town of district Sheikhūpūra where he was born. Childhood is a golden period of life and it is bliss even if one belongs to low strata of the society. He enjoyed his childhood in an area where urban facilities were not available. He said that there were local games like *kabaddi*, *wrestling*, *guli-danda* in his village and he used to take part in these games.¹ Sometimes there used to be a competition of carrying weight of crops in which his father's participation was appreciated many times due to which Jāved was feeling proud of him. He has one brother and one sister who are eight and twelve years younger than him. Being an eldest brother, he used to facilitate and provide guidance to both his siblings and also shared a friendly bond with them.

Education

Muḥammad Jāved's journey for proper education started when he took admission in Government Primary School, Malliān Kalān district Sheikhūpūra. He got his early education under the guidance and kind supervision of Master Khair Dīn who was also headmaster of that school. During his early education, he was much impressed by the beauty of nature in the form of gardens, green fields, trees, water ponds and animals like horses, dogs, bulls and buffalos swimming in the ponds and grazing in the fields. This actually laid the basis for the eco-critical perspective that is expressed through his art. Due to keen interest in observing nature he used to doodle most of the time admiring nature, which took him towards art. He also used to draw the sketches of flowers, plants, trees and other colourful scenes. Nobody was there to guide him properly to develop his artistic skills. After primary education, he took admission in Government High School, Sheikhūpūra where he had a few classmates and he found dedicated teachers and good learning environment. He told an interesting story of his admission in the School which proved to be a great lesson for him. When his father took him for admission, there were also other students came from different villages, suburban areas and from the Sheikhūpūra city as well. All were asked to sit on the ground in rows for a quiz. A questionnaire was given and asked to solve it within an hour. He solved the question paper on time but suddenly changed his answers according to the answers of another student due to which he failed. His father got annoyed, took him to the Head Master and requested to admit him by considering his own answers which were correct. The Head Master did not agree. He however, gave

1. Jāved Muḥammad. Interesting games during his childhood. Shabnam Abbasi. 23rd December 2016.



Kashmir Nowadays-July 2019, oil on canvas, palette-knife, 45x60 cm.

another question paper and asked Jāved to solve it, which was successfully done by him and he was admitted. Muḥammad Jāved felt embarrassed as his cheating was known to everybody present there. From this incident he learned a great lesson and decided not to cheat in his future life in any circumstances.

The subject of drawing was in the syllabus of eighth class due to which he was able to start practicing drawing with the guidance of his drawing master in addition to his classwork. The literacy rate of Jāved's village was extremely low hardly up to 0.5% at that time. Therefore, there was nobody to provide him any coaching or guidance in his studies up to secondary education. Only three students from the village were going to the secondary school with him but they were unable to get through and they stopped pursuing their study even before ninth class.²

When he made his drawings in the village, people gathered around him and used to praise his skill but his parents wanted him to concentrate on his study instead of doing drawing work. However, one of his beloved close relatives rather cousin Muḥammad Afzal who lived in Lahore and had great interest in the film industry, assessed Jāved's potential and suggested his parents to send him to Lahore for further studies after matriculation. His parents hesitated because of their financial constraints. However, despite such circumstances Muḥammad Jāved arrived in Lahore in 1957 and was sent to Government Islamia College. After spending a couple of months, he made efforts to switch over to the field of his interest, on the suggestion of his cousin.

Finally, he applied for admission in the Mayo School of Arts to study architecture. His spirit overwhelmed by artistic aptitude, pushed him towards artistic option for fine arts after matriculation properly. He told that about two hundred students appeared in the admission test but only 40 students were selected for admission at that time.³ There was a Preparatory Class in which newly admitted students of three disciplines Fine Art, Design and Architecture studied together.

During his study, the status of Mayo School of Arts was upgraded and renamed as National College of Arts in 1958 to meet the new challenges under the Colombo Plan. The brilliant students of Preparatory Class were taken up in the College scheme. Afterwards, there was a Fundamental Class which was attended by all the selected students from Mayo School of Arts along with new students who were admitted on the basis of their intermediate study. On passing the Fundamental Class students were interviewed for placement in the above three disciplines. Muḥammad Jāved gave his option for architecture but Prof.

2. Jāved, Muḥammad. Personal Interview. Shabnam Abbāsi. 27th December, 2017.

3. Ibid. Jāved, Muḥammad. Personal interview. Shabnam Abbāsi. December 27, 2017.

Shākir Alī who was Head of the Fine Arts Department at that time immediately said to the Principal, I want him. He was therefore, selected for the study of Fine Arts instead of architecture during interview.⁴ Thus, he became the student of first batch of Fine Arts Department, NCA.

He studied under the supervision of Shākir 'Alī, a famous artist and educationist as well as founder of modern art movement in Pakistan, who later on became Principal of the College after expiry of contract of Prof. Mark Ritter Sponenburg in 1961. This was a turning point of his life of getting inspiration from his teacher Shākir 'Alī.

Most of the senior faculty members were hired from abroad under the Colombo Plan. Besides Shākir 'Alī, Prof James Warn and Prof. Mary Lewis also taught him at NCA from 1958 to 1960. There were also other faculty members such as Hājī Muḥammad Sharīf, Abbāsī Ābdī, Jamīla Zaidī, Ustād Muḥammad Latīf Chughtāi, Niāz Alī Shāh, Bashiruddin, Ustād Shafī and other from whom he benefitted, (Fig. 9). Among them Ustād Laṭīf Chughtāi, Niāz 'Alī Shāh and Bashiruddin were very competent in drawing who taught him up to intermediate level.

Muḥammad Jāved was classmate of Zahoorul Akhlāq and contemporary of Bashīr Mirzā, Nayar 'Alī Dādā, Aḥmad Khān and Salahuddin Mian who made the history of the college and earned fame in their respective fields.⁵ Being a student of Fine Arts (paintings) subjects like painting, miniature paintings, publicity design, history of art and architecture, drafting, printing and lithography were studied by him. The subject of miniature was taught by Hājī Muḥammad Sharīf, a famous miniaturist of Pakistan. There were his other classmates and contemporaries in the department of design and architecture who passed out in 1962 and 1963.

Muḥammad Jāved said that in the last year of graduation there remained only four students in the Fine Arts Department and he was among them.⁶ It was considered the highest achievement in the field of study, as there was no other institute like NCA in the country at that time. He also received Government merit scholarship of rupees 50 per month from NCA during his academic years of study in Fine Arts and was awarded scholarship for further studies in USA and other countries during his mid-career. It is obvious that he was the most brilliant student in his group. Most of the students of first batch reached at the highest level of their respective fields and enjoyed their fame and respect except a few who didn't continue their work.

4. Naeem, Mian. *Drawing with a Passion*. Lahore: Weekly Cutting Edge. 2006. Pg. na.

5. Mahmood Shaukat, ed. *A Man of The Art-Muḥammad Jāved*. Lahore: Pakistan Writers Cooperative Society, 2013. Pg.5.

6. Jāved, Muḥammad. Personal interview. Shabnam Abbasi 23rd January 2017.