



## The Mahabharata

### Mewari Miniature Paintings (1680–1698) by Allah Baksh Volumes I–IV

Alok Bhalla

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- Showcases nearly 2000 never-before published miniature paintings of the Mahabharata by Allah Baksh, from late 17th century Mewar
- Features fine translations of the Mahabharata from Mewari into Hindi by Chandra Prakash Deval and English commentary by Alok Bhalla
- Insightful introductions by Alok Bhalla on each of the parvas, provide a comprehensive understanding of this great Indian epic

Allah Baksh's magnificent miniature paintings of Vyasa's great epic, ***The Mahabharata***, were commissioned by Udaipur's Maharana Jai Singh, and painted between 1680 and 1698. The selection of nearly 2000 paintings, published in four volumes, are from a folio of more than 4000 extant works illuminating the Mahabharata. The fifth volume of 500 paintings devoted to the Gita, has already been published.

These radiant miniatures, which follow almost every story in every chapter of the Mahabharata, have no precedent in India's art tradition. The emphasis in these paintings is not on heroic posturing and spiritual pride, but on the pain that the earth and its creatures endure when human beings tragically fail to fulfill their dharma. The images in the paintings are symbolically charged, their colors are clear and luminous, their lines are restrained and precise. Allah Baksh's art of visionary thoughtfulness deserves an honored place in the great library of Indian scriptures and their visual interpretations.

Introductions to the parvas illuminated in these four volumes offer reflections on the moral resonance of the stories, as they reveal the fate of a civilization from its divine beginning to its fateful destruction. The Hindi translation of the Mewari text in the colophons, describing the story being illustrated, furthers our understanding of the history of cultural exchange between the different religions, regions and languages of India. Comments on the paintings in English enable the reader to decode the images and follow the narrative grandeur of this great Indian epic.

**Alok Bhalla** is a widely published critic, translator and poet. He has taught in various universities in the US and India, and has held Fellowships from different academic institutes in France, Italy, England, Germany, Canada and Israel. His books include Stories about the Partition of India (4 volumes), Partition Dialogues, Shades of the Preternatural, among others. His verse translation of Dharamvir Bharati's play, *Andha Yug*, is a recognized classic.

**Chandra Prakash Deval** is an eminent poet, fiction writer, translator, bibliophile, and cultural historian. He has published 14 collections of poetry in Hindi and Rajasthani. He has also translated the works of Ashok Vajpeyi, Ramakanth Rath and others into Rajasthani. He has been the recipient of many prestigious awards like the Sahitya Akademi Award and the Padma Shri.