



(Top) One of the famine sketches in the collection of the Bengal Foundation, which looks like a copy of the one (Bottom) that has been reproduced several times as an original of Zainul.

FOLLOWING the discovery of two fake paintings attributed to Nabi, Bulbul approached the man from whom he acquired the paintings. "He was furious and he threatened me over the phone. He even sent a few henchmen to teach me a lesson. I was manhandled by them," says Bulbul who filed a general dairy with the Uttara police station stating the above. The daily Jugantar carried the story of the fake paintings as well as the predicament of Bulbul on June 15.

Interestingly, a few weeks before the discovery of the two Nabi watercolours, Chitrayon was accused of displaying a pastel work that they attributed to Shafiuddin Ahmed. The painting came from the same source. "I borrowed it from Tuhin for a show that I arranged," says Bulbul.

Discoveries of fakes do not usually lead us back to the forger. The persons whose handiworks are fakes surely possess skills both in paint

ing and in eluding the art world giants who enjoy a steady sale. Nabi feels that it is time to take some affirmative actions against these people. "It seems that the one who produced the fakes in my case had the ability to produce the semblance of watercolour wash. He must've gone through academic training, otherwise he could not have produced such fakes," says Nabi. Although he talks of taking measures, he is also worried about the fact that if the artist is somebody from our community it would certainly put a blotch on the reputation of the artists as whole.

!! WE have a thriving art market in Bangladesh. And a section of people is trying to undo what we have achieved in the last twenty years," says Hashem Khan, who fears that the presence of fakes may shoo away a lot of potential buyers from the art market.

The prevalence of fake paintings has been on the rise. In fact as the price of art works skyrocketed in the 1990s, the chance of encountering fakes has also gone up. "In the beginning it was the works of three pioneers -- Zainul Abedin, Kamrul Hasan and SM Sultan, whose works were being forged. I remember when a prestigious gallery like Shilpangan put up show of Kamrul Hasan's works in 2002, there were a plethora of works by the master that looked like second rate art. It was Qayyum Chowdhury who first pointed out that most of the works were sloppily done imitations," recalls Hashem Khan who is worried that no one is taking any step to check this flooding of the market by fake paintings. In that notorious show of Kamrul's work most of the paintings were brought from the collection of the deceased artist's own daughter. So, no one could really come up with the proof that they were not the works of the late master. The only sign of spuriousness was that most of them looked shoddy.