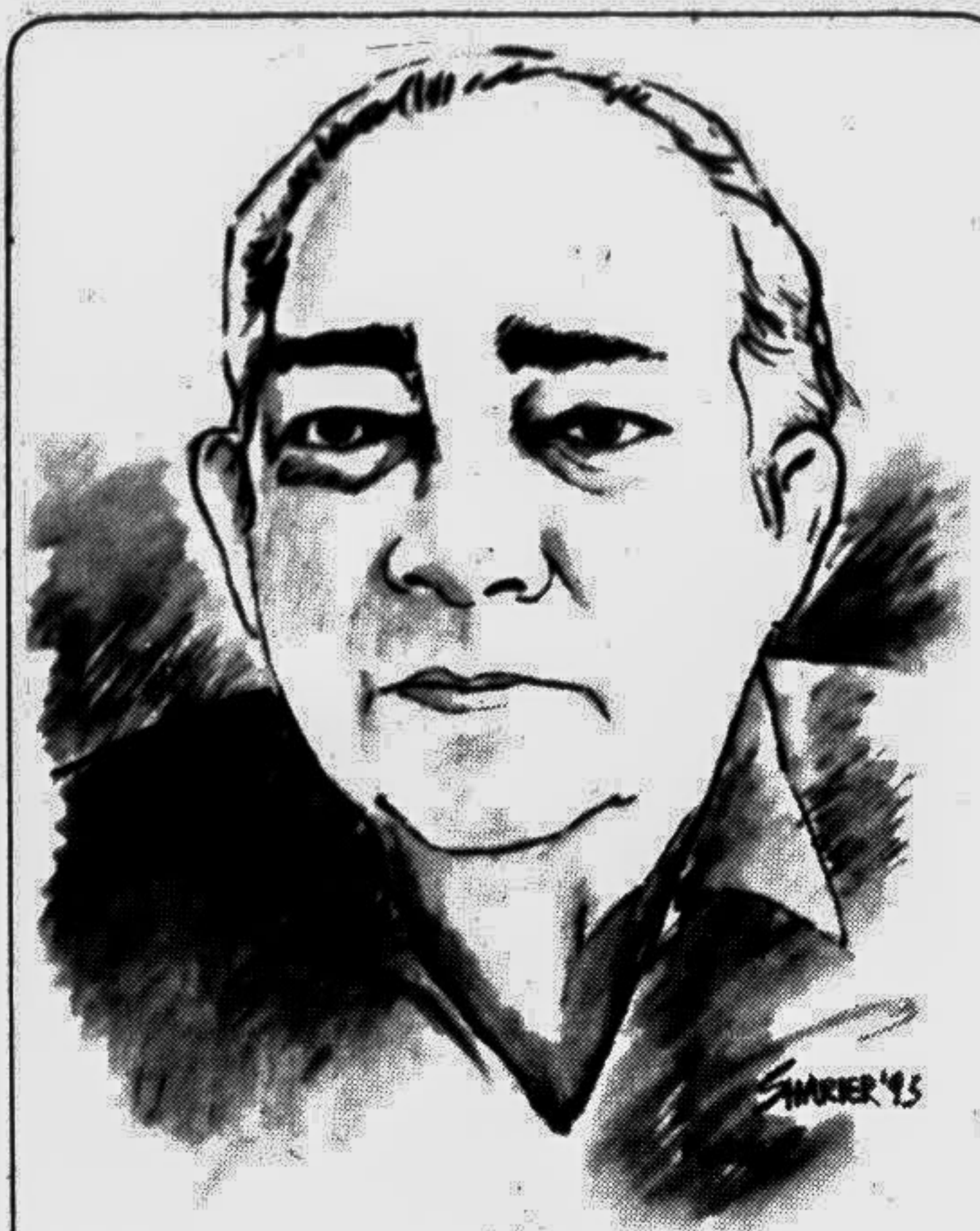


# Of Dreams and Mundane Matters

by Fayza Haq



## The Dreamer the Chronicler

by Hubert Francis Sarkar

Yes, the risorgimento comes as the ultimate coronation. Yes, the nirvana can never be less spectacular. The ascension of the dreamer the chronicler into the eternal kingdom of resurrection.

Ends the many-splendoured odyssey. Now, the peregrine reaches the last station.

Thus the semi-darkness that surrounds us becomes thinner and thinner. The sons and daughters of light increasingly shatter the veil.

Thus the inner world bursts forth like a magma-spewing crater.

Thus the silent trail-blazer becomes keener and keener.

As his reverent heart transformed into a sacrosanct chapel. And his captivating words a never-ceasing cascade. The half-dormant minstrel in him would hail the marvels of the marvels.

Panorama after panorama would thus be unveiled. Paeans after paeans of a yet-to-be-crafted epic would resonate even amid this Babel.

Unperturbed by the vacillations of the faves and the have-nots. The dreamer would single-mindedly strive to reach the unreachable.

Even though he glimpsed the rot and the dirty spots. Even though he heard parrots unrelentingly squeaking, he remained unbudged.

I wonder how he could unceasingly celebrate life's puja even amid these rots.

Like a great skipper who has abruptly declared a glorious innings. He has left the arena.

Now, the dreamer the chronicler is freed from all his yearnings.

Like an indefatigable voyager, he has explored his very own world.

Profoundly touching our heart-strings, now, he has declared this innings.

IN Proshanta Karmakar's exhibition of 40 photographs at the Alliance Francaise, the photographer dealt with the subject of dreams and ordinary themes of everyday life, bringing in the scenes from foot paths, railway stations and crowded bazaars.

In "Dream -I" the photographer had brought in the profile of an exotic goddess, with an enormous, beautiful butterfly, juxtaposed with a young boy astride a horse. He had used two negative transparencies so that he could achieve a mysterious and poetic atmosphere.

Proshanto showed the same child on a horse in "Dream II", this time dreaming of his dead father who was advising him to follow the correct paths of life. The photograph, which had an out of this world flair about it, was in shades of brown, yellow ochre, white and turquoise. The photograph had the qualities of a painting with its impressionistic effect.

In the third piece in the "Dream" series, the boy on the horse was seen from a different angle, with the delineation of his mother carrying him slung on her back, when he was a baby. The boy was depicted as recalling his dead mother, who was done in black and yellow, while the boy was in greys and blues.

The fourth piece in the series had the boy on the horse yet again, seen against the background of the cyclone scenes of Bangladesh. The background negative, as in all cases of the dream series, was based on an etching. The element of horror and pain of the cyclone had been well captured.

In "Bangladesh" one found a collage of scenes, one taken from the Liberation War, done in grey, black and red. This was combined with small photographs taken from the village and city life and which depicted people at work. This was combined with an original etching of a woman's portrait and a woodcut of geometrical and abstract designs. Prints of newspapers had been transferred to a zinc plate in the form of photo etching and this lent an admirable contrast in white. On top were splashes of yellow, orange and green acrylic.

"Good Morning" showed a cleaner woman sweeping the grass, as seen through a window pane. The photograph brought in reflected scenes on three other adjacent window panes at the same time. The photographer wanted to focus the attention on sweepers who worked hard to beautify our surroundings, and who are yet socially looked down upon despite their usefulness and sincerity. The photo was in black, green and blue and at times had a translucent effect.

"Peace" depicted the heads of two street children sleeping on top of tiles. These deprived people have a tremendous amount of peace as compared to the rich who sometimes have to resort to even tranquilisers to



Dream



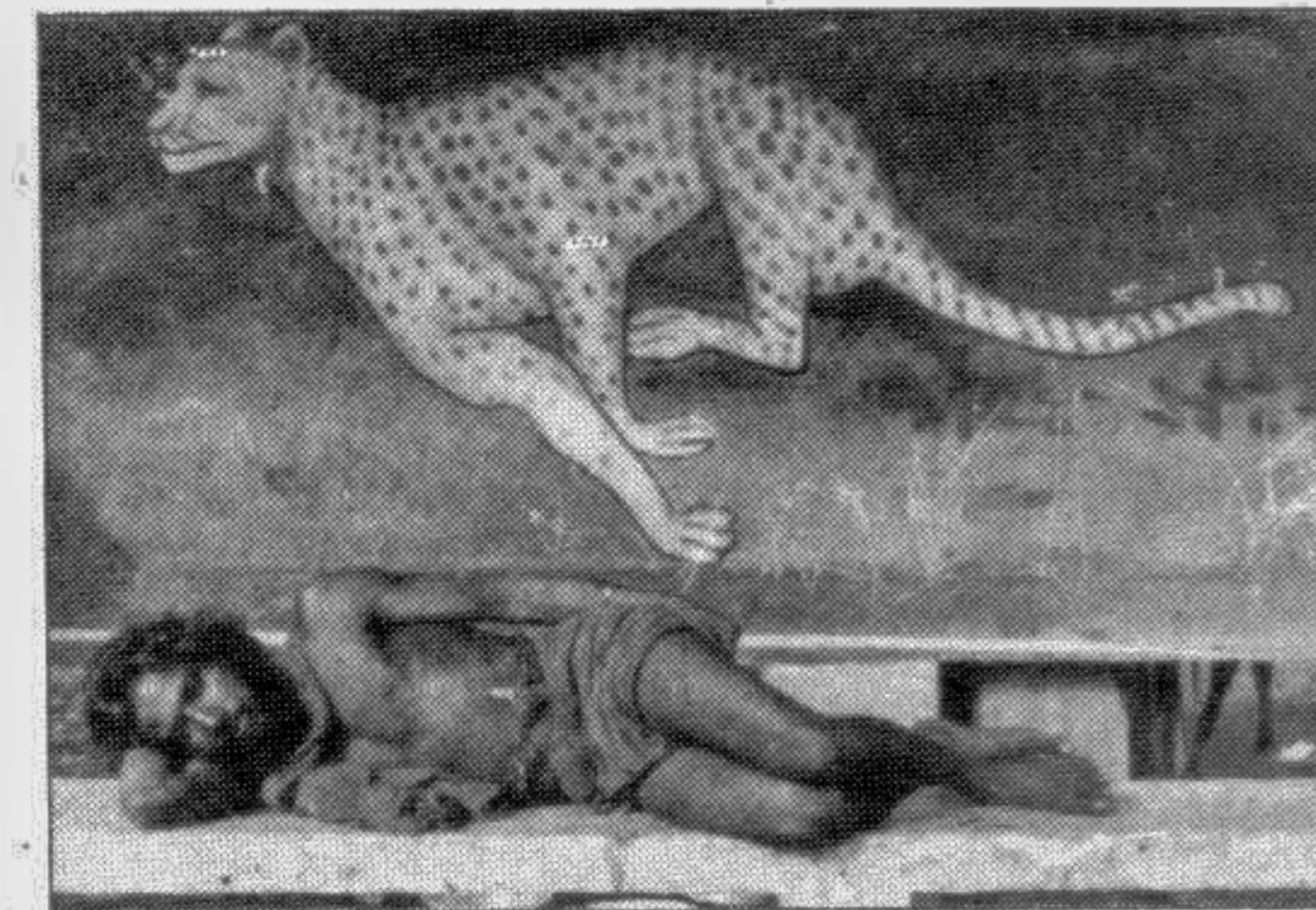
Life



Peace



Bathing



Untitled

get sleep", Proshanto commented. The picture was in shades of browns, pinks and black.

"Life-I" showed a river scene in a misty way, with a boy coming from a distance to collect a beautiful flower. "Life -II" focused on the hands of a worker, with which, the photographer felt, could be brought in social justice, peace and harmony — by the combined efforts of all the workers in the riverside.

In "Festival" one saw two sets of hands, the older one putting on bangles on that of the young fair girl. Here Proshanto wished to bring in the theme of the girl's growing up — to learn to beautify herself.

"Untitled" showed a "sadhu" sleeping on the pavement, dressed in red. Behind him was a painting of a leopard from a roadside advertisement. The photographer felt that sometimes people like the "sadhu" who posed as religious individuals and took advantage of the gullibility of the innocent and needy were as dangerous as wild animals.

In "Portrait-I" two portraits

## Has Halloween had its Day?

Nicola Cole writes from London

HALLOWE'EN, traditional night of the unquiet dead, once served as a potent reminder not to stray down the path of sin. And as the ancient pagan festival approaches in its Christianised form, the pleasant sounding Eve of All Souls, we shall certainly be treated to a retelling of old myths.

But these are now considered quaint, even derisory tales, more a subject for lurid Hollywood movies than injunctions to good behaviour. The Pope has different ways of denouncing sin these days, such as his Encyclical on the need for improved moral conduct.

And where Halloween is concerned, the Church generally prefers to make pronouncements as rarely as possible.

Occasionally priests are lured by the media into vigor-

A new age of reason is overtaking the "mumbo-jumbo industry" whose favourite festival is Halloween (October 31). Few regret its decline, least of all the Churches, for the once-pagan Eve of All Souls has been more of a hindrance than a help. Gemini News Service reports on the transition.

ous denunciations, but these have become the exception rather than the rule.

Their Bible-based message is that human souls are mortal and that an after-life without death and resurrection is Satanic. It may be perfectly valid, but who is listening?

Certainly not those bored with the ritual repetition of what they see as old supersti-

tions. Nor does it reach people so directionless that they follow anyone or anything which seems to offer an exciting, positive way forward — be it a new Hitler or Halloween's key to an occult world of unimaginable possibilities.

The audience for the Father Damien of this world — he was the priest-here in the fact-based film *The Exorcist* — live in a halfway house accommodating those who find it hard to fully believe or totally disbelieve.

In the Commonwealth alone, this house has around 6,600 million residents and in the United States about 163 million, according to surveys.

had been combined — that of an old woman in red, black and brown and almost like a shadow and, more obvious to the eye, the picture of the happy and healthy child. Proshanto, who had wished to depict an old woman dreaming of her childhood, had combined two negatives while making the print.

"Portrait - II" delineated a woman looking at the world through a lens. On top of the photograph a female nude had been painted on. Proshanto wanted to depict his belief in the picture that people often wore facades and that it was necessary to know the people well before venturing deep into any deep friendship with them.

In "Vacillating-I" one saw an idyllic picture of happy and energetic children in the village. "Vacillating -III" showed a number of tops moving about, with the legs and lower part of the clothes of the watching children in the background.

"Martyr's Mother" brought in a weeping woman in green over whom the structures of the Shahid Minar had been superimposed.

In his exhibition, the photographer wished to depict the good and evil in our society. He also dealt with dreams which he felt was an important part of life. "Man comes into the world to leave something behind and his dreamhelp him in achieving something concrete," he commented.

Proshanto won the best award for graphic arts in the 9th National Young Artists Exhibition at the Shilpakala Academy in '90, and in '91 he won the coveted Okamoto Prize for photography in the competition held under the auspices of Asian Cultural Centre of UNESCO. He has taken part in eight group photographic exhibitions.

form, is more likely to enhance than erode our appreciation of both natural and supernatural worlds.

We will eventually understand better where the two merge or divide — how, for instance, the human mind can trigger external energy forces sufficient to move objects and even translocate the body itself.

This extraordinary phenomenon, authenticated in several cases including the Israeli psychic Uri Geller, could cast a new perspective on the lore of Halloween's flying witches.

The general assumption is that these supposed brides of Satan flew only in their minds, under the influence of hallucinogenic drugs.

It may be, however, that some actually did possess the psychokinetic power to physically move from one place to another in an instant.

A cluster of parapsychology professors, including Robert Morris, an American working as Britain's first official "ghostbuster", are seeing answers to such questions.

The process will be slow — Dr Morris' research at Edinburgh University has al-

## Painam Nagar

## Shamsur Rahman

Continued from page 9 playing a straight bat and sometimes kicking over the traces as it were — identifies crucial areas of conflicts pervading our personal and social lives, and also our collective struggle, and justifies the *raison d'être* of a never-ending quest for meanings, for new experiences, for new forms.

The journey-motif is very much present in Shamsur Rahman, as it is there in every great work of art starting from Homer down to Tagore, but this journey which is simultaneously aesthetic, historical and political does not follow a neat Dantesque scheme consisting of a reachable paradise; it is rather a journey which both accepts a destination and rejects it. In short, this journey resists any schematic closedness, any hegemonic ideology as such. This is perhaps one of the significant marks of Rahman's politics of imagination which does not, of course, end up making him a synonym or a metaphor for Bengali nationalism only.

It has become a critical reflex action to point out in the act of dividing and splitting things as a means of control that Shamsur Rahman truly represents Bengali nationalism. Yes, he does it, at times with unadorned freshness. But, that is simply one of the many representative qualities of Rahman's poetry. True, he writes explicitly about Bangladesh, its landscape and people, its struggle and sufferings, its contemporary political turmoil and tension, and so on. In his poetry, Rahman also razzes and teases and deprecates Bangladesh, exhibiting his high-voltage concerns with nothing but his soil and people. This is perhaps one of the reasons as to why even the common people, untutored in modernist poetry, comfortably find themselves in Shamsur Rahman. But, what is really important to notice is that Rahman creatively globalises Bangladesh, and in turn Bangladeshes the globe, generating a counter relation of power — both political and aes-

thetic — in the face of the Western imperialist hegemony, to use Foucault's concept. To put it simply, Shamsur Rahman has gone to the West only to conquer it, not to be conquered by it.

Given the quality and suggestiveness of his poetry, Shamsur Rahman today demands postmodernist political readings which would reveal that Shamsur Rahman now and then captures post-colonial mood, milieu, moment and momentum. Here, I have only touched upon an aspect or two, with the purpose of at least providing an inkling that Shamsur Rahman is readable in the light of changing critical principles and that he is capable of creating a space for the struggling nation like us,

for the Third World and for the Commonwealth countries, from where the dictating aesthetic and cultural standards of the West can be challenged.

One can certainly say that Shamsur Rahman is one of the most powerful living poets in the world. His ardent and optative assertion that he would not cease to write until death is indeed a positive pronouncement full of vigour, energy and youthfulness. But, given whatever he has achieved so far, he should take every moment as a creative challenge from now on. We don't want him to repeat himself, but to kill himself every moment to be born again. A powerful poet is the best killer of his self and the best creator, too.

## "Death be Not Proud"

Continued from page 10 not faded away from our memories.

The aesthetics of death is a subject of immense value and lasting appeal in literature. The poignancy of its nature has idolized many literary characters, loved and adored by countless readers through the ages. Death of Durga of Pather Panchali, Andre Bolkonsky of War and Peace and Sydney Carton of a Tale of Two Cities has such gripping human appeal which moves readers of any time, any age, any place. The endearment of these characters are rooted in the tragic circumstances of their death and hostility of their destiny.

It is human nature that thoughts of one kind or another fill up our mind. Thought of death is therefore, not a stranger to human mind. It is a matter of concern that this stranger may turn out to be a stubborn occupant and break us down. Human mind needs

to be fortified against this hostility. A correct and positive attitude can be strong defence against this formidable foe.

Courage and faith have been found to be enduring traits on which positive attitude of any kind can be developed. Courage helps us to look beyond the monstrous aspect of death. There is great salvation in looking on death as something which will come when it has to come.

It is not uncommon to see that many of us shrink to think of eternal damnation in hell. But religion also offers us strength in the faith that God has created human beings out of love and that He is far more generous in His mercy; that death is like returning home.

Death is our destiny. Submit to it. But should we allow it rule our lives? It can take the life out of us even when we are alive. Let us join John Donne in saying "Death, be not proud."

hallowed /hə'ləʊd/ ADJ If something is hallowed, it is respected, because it is old or important; a literary word. ...those hallowed offices on State Street.

Halloween /hə'ləʊn/; also spelt Hallowe'en. NO Halloween is October 31st. It is traditionally said to be the night on which ghosts and witches can be seen, and so children often dress up as ghosts and witches. Many rituals grew up around Hallowe'en.

hallstand /həl'stænd/ hallstands NC A hallstand is a piece of furniture on which you hang coats and hats.

hallucinate /hə'lju:sneɪt/ hallucinates, hallucinating V If you hallucinate, you see things that are not there because you are ill.



This is one measure of the battleground for souls, but who's winning? Though religious belief systems cannot claim outright victory, they arguably possess the leading edge over the forces of darkness.

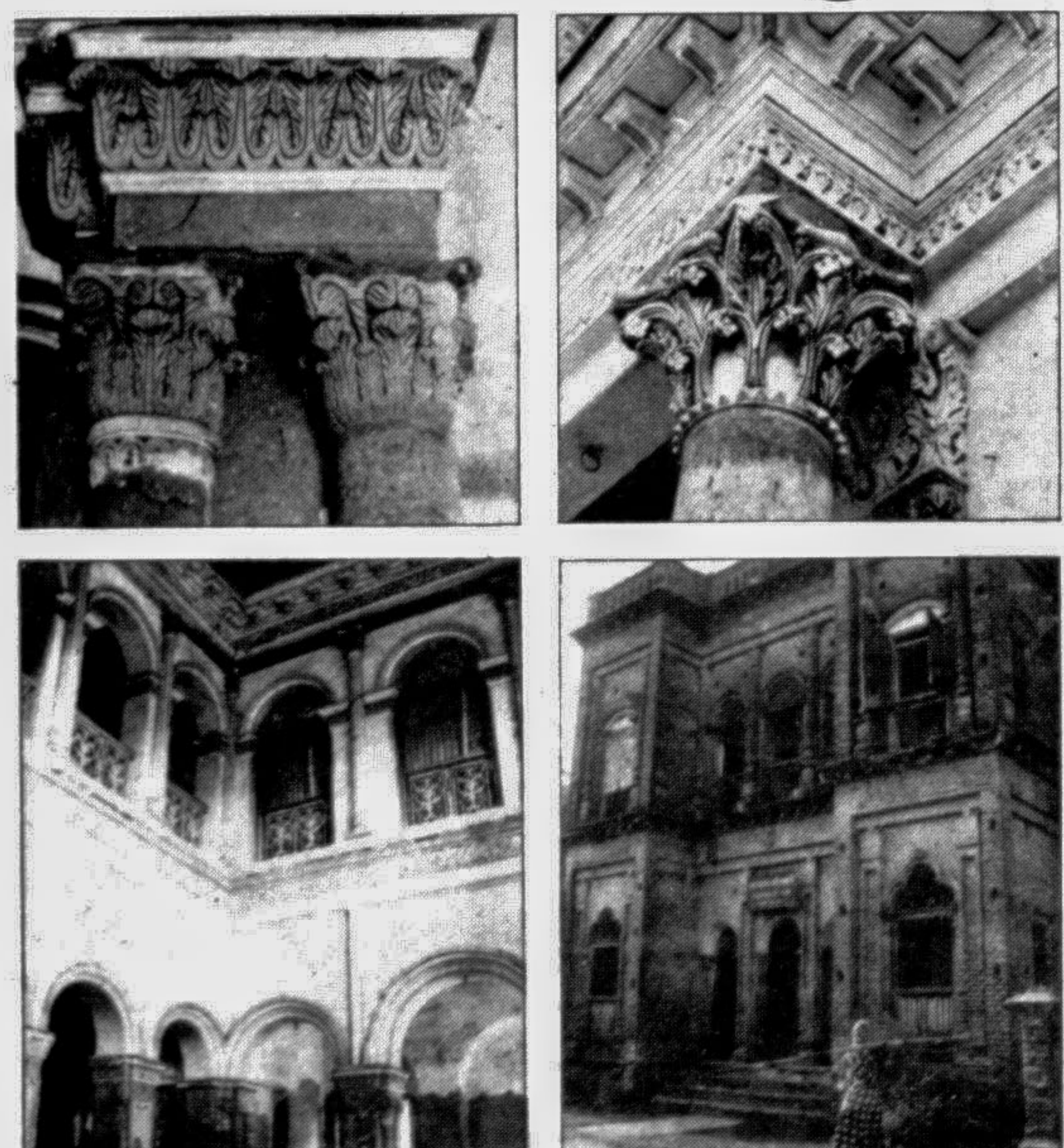
And that is despite the onward march of scientific rationalism, popularly blamed for desertions from the armies of Allah, Buddha and God.

Scientific rationalism's great 18th century upsurge never stopped the birth and growth of the Methodist movement, and in its present

ready lasted seven years — but will ultimately tear away the veil between fantasy and reality.

This won't be welcome news for those who lie life tinged with mystery. But the churches will be delighted. It will sound the death-knell for Halloween.

NICOLA COLE, once a staff writer and newsdesk executive on the *London Times* and *Financial Correspondent* with the *London Bureau* of the *Australian*, is now a freelance writer based in Norfolk, England.



Continued from page 9 buildings were successfully recycled into offices, stores, artist's studios and apartments in Chicago's downtown.

These old beauties are part of our national history and culture. We can get a feeling of the way we were and also see what happens when we don't care.

We can learn by looking at the ruins how the structures were put together. And how the un-

daunted craftsmanship of Bengal produced such ingenious work of architecture in brick. Time has long passed for our landmark saving authorities such as the Archeology or the Public Works Department to wake up and come to rescue. The conservation work of Painam Nagar can be easily incorporated into our national tourism programme so that these idle resources can start earning revenue. We cannot let

our national heritage disintegrate so easily. Why cannot people like architects, artists, historians and industrialists together pioneer a salvage programme? Or should we just keep quiet and watch our architectural treasure go waste as quickly and easily as those six Taka bags?

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