



Interview with Members of the Jury

by Fayza Haq

"Our Painters are Influenced by Western Imagery"

—Ali Imam (Pakistan)

Ali Imam, one of the members of the jury of the 6th Art Biennale Bangladesh, a well-known painter and teacher from Pakistan, who had been in Dhaka in '81 for the first Biennale, when he was one of the country representatives, commented about the recent Biennale, "Since the first time I came, tremendous progress has been made. There were fewer countries the last time I had come. Now there are about 28 countries. However, the participation of the major painters at that time was slightly better. This time, except for the Bangladeshi painters, the contribution of major painters from other countries is not that good. Of course, new younger painters are doing promising work. There should have been better representation from countries like India and Nepal. There is nothing from Indonesia, although they do quite good work. On the whole, the general standard of the exhibition is acceptable. We had a difficult time in judging. But the jury was satisfied and we were more or less unanimous in our decision. We worked independently of each other. We each picked ten painters, and in all, there were 42 painters that we chose for the final selection. Then we evaluated them in our own way, giving them marks. Out of these, we selected eleven and next we put our heads together and chose three gold medal winners and the rest of the eight were in the list of highly recommended painters."

Discussing the state of art in Pakistan, Ali Imam said, "Most of the senior artists have died — people like Sadequain, Shaker Ali, Allah Bakhsh, Chughtai, Ahmed Parvez and Haji Mohammed Sharif. In the second generation of painters there are some very good ones. They are in the modern wave length and perception of art. Most of the time these painters are going out, and are influenced by western imagery, as is the case in most of the countries in the world. What bothers me is that

the painters are not studying the history of thought and the history of art as much as they ought to, because you can go to the moon and return as blank as you went there. Learning abroad is not the thing that matters. It is the intake of an artist in multi-dimensional or cross-disciplinary knowledge that builds the inner rational kernel of the artist which helps him to produce work of greater intensity as well as helps him to create a problem, sort it out, and if he is not sorting it out, he suffers and he tries hard."

He continued, "Once he is sorted out he paints in a manner for a while and recreates another problem. Thus there is a continuous process of creation and recreation, moving from one problem to another throughout. Unfortunately, the painters in the third world are not loaded. They show promise and talent. They reach the zenith in their country of name and fame and then they become like a plateau, which is going up and down. They begin to repeat themselves. They start to mark time and copy themselves. The quest for search and research and further adventure seems to be on the wane. The younger generation of painters are not reading that much. They start making money and they think they have achieved everything. To my mind the scene is dismal."

Talking about the established painters in the limelight in his country, he mentioned Zahurul Ikhtlaq, Gulgee, Meher Afroze, Qudsiya Nisar, Imran Meer, Iqbal Jaffrey, Nahid Raza, Salima Hashmi, Collin David, and Ahmed Khan. "Zubaida Agha, who is about 70, is the senior most painter. There is the other younger generation of artists in Lahore and Karachi who have made a good start but how far they will go I cannot tell. There is an inner search going within themselves. For me a painter has to have an intuitive inner design."

"In my 12 years stay in London, 5000 graduates were



produced from Britain each year. There were 60,000 qualified artists and out of them only about 10 or 15 acquired national fame. Even when the best climate of work exists, unless you have the intuitive sense of design and inner sensitivity you do not have a chance to become a painter. The other two things which are important is the climate of work that one chooses to be in and the fertility of mind, which is nature's gift. These are the predicaments of the painters around the world. Whether you are in London, Paris or Dhaka, the schools don't make a painter out of you. You have to have an intuitive inner sense of design. The schools teach you perspective, use of colour, use of graphics, etc. But basically you are alone. Just as there are no schools of poetry, so I feel there should be no schools of fine arts. After knowing the basics, the artist should be attached to a philosopher painter who should guide the artist," he added.

"The artist has to have it within himself. He must work hard. As I said before, you can send a man to the moon and he may come back as blank as he

went. It's not enough to go to Europe or USA. The brighter ones with little talent lift up images and build a premise on that. This is not being honest," he continued.

Asked if the Asian artists are copying the west and so losing their identity, Ali Imam commented, "Indian classical music has a tradition. So does the Indian classical dancing. We have not been corrupted by western ballet, just as Mozart, Beethoven and Bach have no influence on our music. Instrumental and vocal music coming from Amir Khusro and Mian Tansen is in its pristine form today. With the advent of the British we lost our bearing as regards painting and sculpture. Solomon and Gerard schools of art were begun. Rabindranath Tagore and Jamini Roy encouraged water colour and oil painting. Thus in painting our tradition has been broken up. We look to western forms of painting for inspiration, even though individual artists are trying to assert themselves and create an indigenous art in places like Bangladesh, India, in certain Arabian countries and the Philippines. I am not for reorientation or Renaissance tradition. But there is a racial subconscious in us. We think of Ghalib, Meer, Ramayana and Mahabharata. There is a living tradition of art. However, in places like Pakistan it has been restricted to jewellery, carpet making, woodcarving or pottery. Nevertheless, in the 46 years of independence people are beginning to understand globalization, by a tradition begun by Jamini Roy."

Speaking about the Bangladeshi artists Ali Imam said, "They are the best in the exhibition. There are very good Indian artists too but none of their work has come. I really liked Bangladesh's Kibria, Aminul Islam, Rashid Chowdhury and Murtaza Baseer. The younger generation of artists of Bangladesh are also doing well.

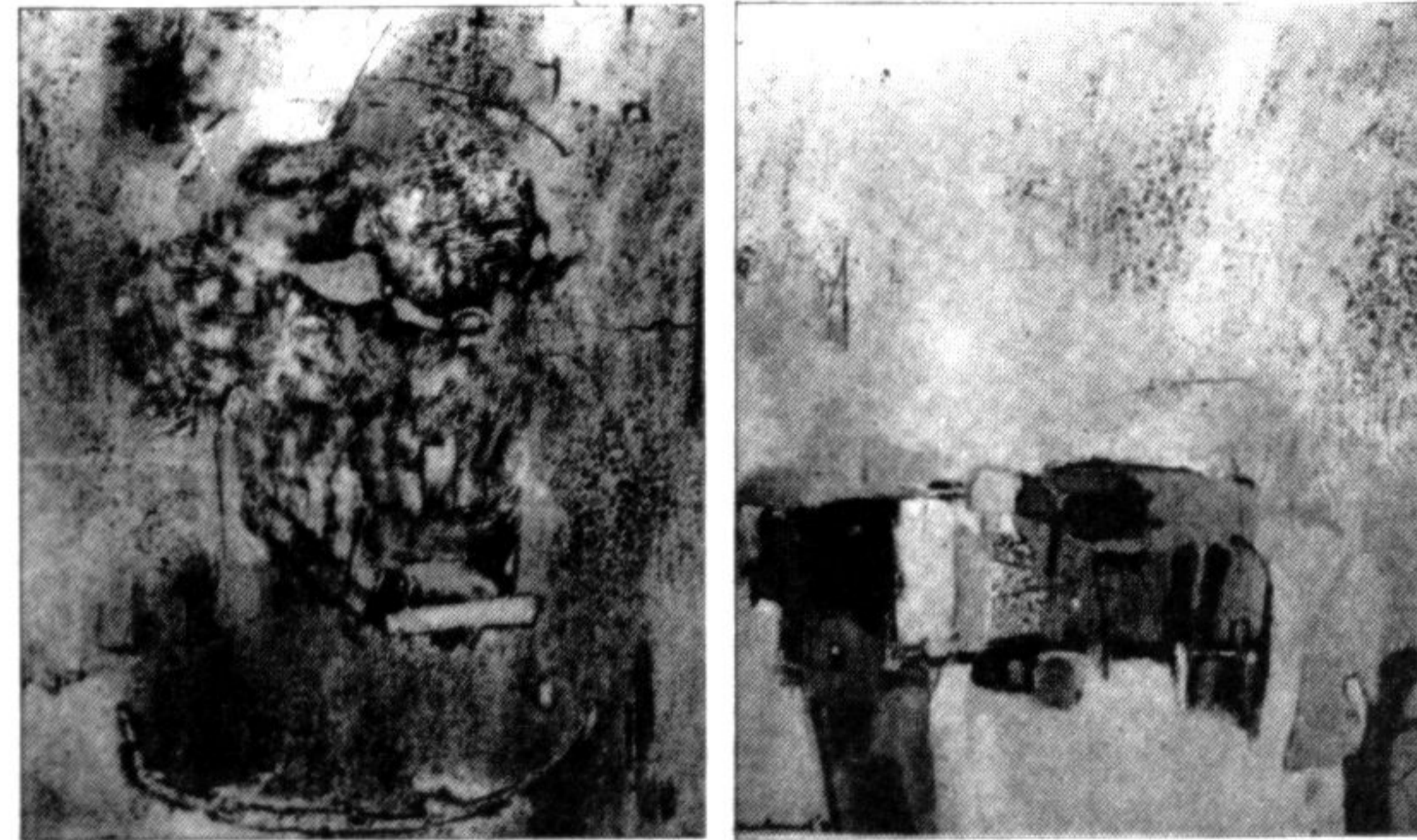
emergency. The influence of Kibria, which Haque admits with pride, is, to me, more an honour of a devotee than a factual statement; because in late seventies and early eighties Haque's was figures and foliage in bright range of palette; these works were exploratory in character and striving towards a deeper dialect in aesthetics. But very soon, Haque loomed large with his personal expression and idiosyncrasies and stamped his bold and glaring identity.

Out spoken and boisterous in life style, winning even his foe to his side, Haque was one time adored by his contemporaries and seniors, now he is adored by them, no one can ignore him now as a painter or as a man of the society. He paints with ease, lives a hilarious life with friends and his students. Almost nothing is difficult or impossible to him. But this status he earned after fighting for more than two decades. Mahmudul Haque made himself an artist; among his friends and colleagues whoever disliked the idea, had to swallow that bitter pill, he came out with flying colours against those who are now withered.

Mahmudul Haque's artistic life spans over two full decades; he has proved to be very productive despite of problems and hazards linked up in the life of an artist. He has so far been able to put up as many as 20 exhibitions of his own works at home and abroad each time with new canvases. He has also visited continental Europe, India, Pakistan and Japan and participated in all the national and international shows of Bangladesh painters organized at home and abroad.

The World of Mahmudul Haque

by Abu Taher



WHEN Mahmudul Haque graduated from the Institute of Fine Arts Dhaka, in 1968, he was already determined to free himself from the rigour and discipline of academic imitation; and he was ready to venture for the alluring and experimental world of modern art.

Haque, now well-known as an abstract expressionist in Bangladesh scene, had to struggle a lot against negative forces, within and without, to reach to the present stage. We remember his first non-academic compositions with faces, figures and foliage in the semi-

abstract style; geometric shapes did also crop up; these were mostly in pinks, screens and ambers; sometimes the colour palettes were monochromatic and conservative.

Haque's most recent works including the "Rains" series, for which he has been honoured with National Award last year, are his feelings in colours and forms; the soft spontaneity, the rain and monsoon gone of the Ganges doab, its life and land left impression on the mind of the artist found abstract but apt expression in his works. Haque shows equal strength in handling both large and small

canvases. Sometimes, some areas seem blank, as if they got minimum attention, but they are eloquently vocal to express the feelings of the painter, which again heightens the unity of the total.

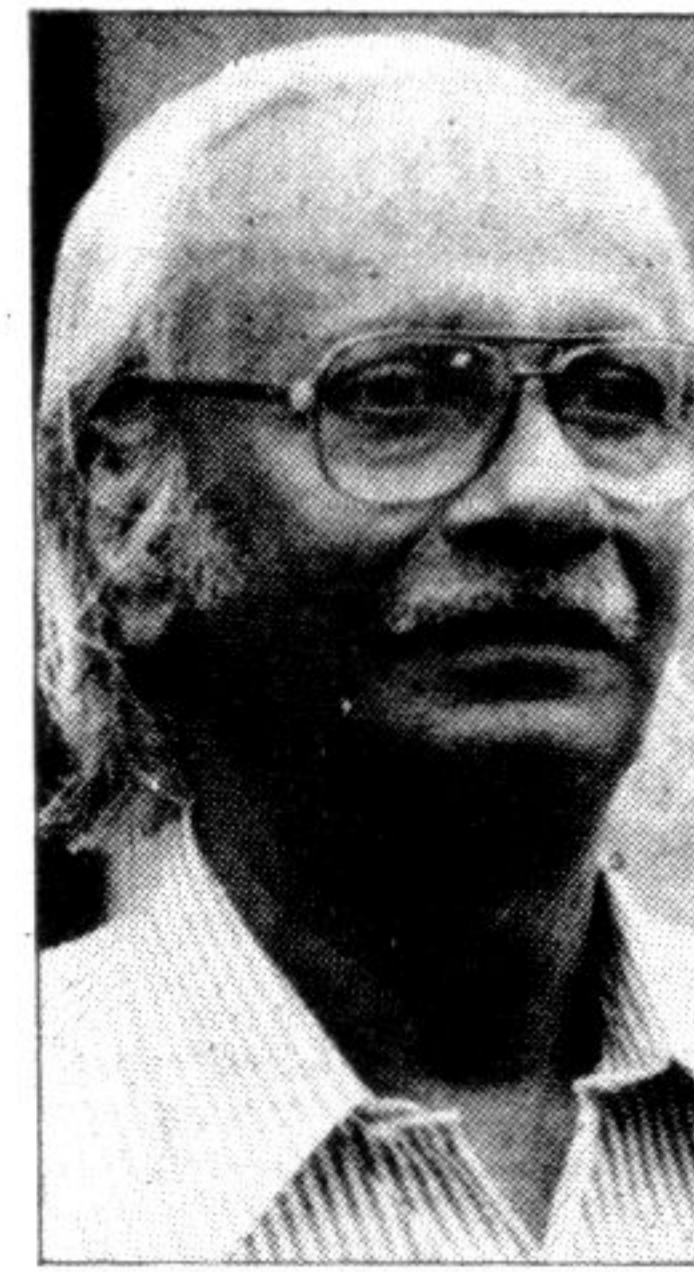
In this exhibition, we discover two simultaneous approaches developed side by side. The diluted tones, the texture illusion, the fluidity of the surface and also the broken geometric forms go side by side; — may be, it is the character of the painter whom we find as a kind and reasonable personality, mingled with the sharp edge of a knife that cuts, clear in

"I am Particularly Disappointed with India"

—Qayyum Chowdhury (Bangladesh)

QAYYUM Chowdhury, another member of the jury of the Art Biennale Bangladesh '93, and one of the senior artists of Bangladesh said, "I believe this Biennale is better than the previous ones. I think the Bangladesh section in particular is very rich, compared to the other participating foreign countries. I believe that the other countries did not do a serious job of selecting and collecting the paintings. In future they should send their best works and not the mediocre ones as they have done this time. By sending inferior works they lower the standard of the Biennale."

He added, "I am particularly disappointed with India and Sri Lanka. I think the cause for the poor representation are officials who have selected the paintings and do not know what is a good piece of work. The art authorities abroad are obviously care-



less about their work. They simply did a routine piece of job

and failed to do a good task". Talking about the countries that had excelled, he said, "I admired the work of Singapore, Korea and Japan, of course. From the Middle East there has been promising work from Iraq and the Arab Emirates".

He felt that the Art Biennale '93 excelled the ones before. "The exhibition this time is bigger and so we got the opportunity to view more paintings from different Asian countries."

Dwelling on Bangladesh's entries, he particularly lauded the works of the younger generation.

Asked if our painters were getting too westernized, Qayyum Chowdhury said artists like Mansurul Karim, who won the gold medal, have their works based on Bangladeshi tradition. He felt that holding a biennale regularly helped the artists in getting more and more exposure.

List of Participants

- BHUTAN**
1. Nahep Dorji, 2. Ugyen Lhendup, 3. Ugyen, 4. Neten Tshering, 5. Sungay Dorji, 6. Thinley, 7. Namgay Tshering Wangchuk, 8. Kunzang Thinley

- BAHRAIN**
1. Rashid Oraifi, 2. Ahmed Anan, 3. A Latif Mofize, 4. Mohd Al Mohawi, 5. Karim Al Oraid, 6. Ahmed Neshaba, 7. Balkies Fakhroo, 8. A Karim Albosta

- CHINA**
1. Shan Zheng, 2. Zhou Changjiang, 3. Wang Yuqi, 4. Zhao Wenhua
5. Cao Jigang, 6. Cui Kaixi, 7. Su Haiqing, 8. Zhao Ge, 9. Gao Quan, 10. Shun Xiangyang

- INDIA**
1. Vinod Shah, 2. Rainbali Kani, 3. Jayani Parikh, 4. Prafullah Dahanukar, 5. APP Panneer Selvam, 6. P S Chander Sheker, 7. Swapan Kumar Das, 8. Abbas Battiwala, 9. Vidhya Sagar Upadhyay, 10. Babu Namodiri K, 11. Madan Lal

- IRAQ**
1. Muhraddin Adhim, 2. Amir Alobaidi

- JAPAN**
1. Kazunori Sadahiro, 2. Kijuko Yahaga

- JORDAN**
1. Wijdan Ali, 2. Nawal Abdullah, 3. Ghada Dahdaleh, 4. Abdel Rouf Shamoun, 5. Suha Shoman, 6. Dodi Tabbaa, 7. Samer Tabbaa, 8. Nabila Hilmi

- REPUBLIC OF KOREA**
1. Kim Jun-Keun, 2. Choi Han-Dong, 3. Cha Dae-Young, 4. Cha Myung-Hi, 5. Park Ji-Sook, 6. Lee Jae-Ho, 7. Kyung Dal-Pyo, 8. Chun Kwang-Young, 9. Lee Yeul, 10. Ahn Hyun-Il, 11. Park Sang-Sook, 12. Kim Hee-Seung, 13. Kyea Nak-Young, 14. Lin Jae-Sun, 15. Kang Seung-Hee, 16. Yim Young-Kil, 17. Seo Jeong-Hee

- LAOS**
1. Sikounnavong Kanha, 2. Luangrath Kongphat, 3. Sivai Savay, 4. Kham Souk Keomin Muang, 5. Manivong Chanthone, 6. Sinharath Bounsanong

- MALAYSIA**
1. Awang Damit Ahmad, 2. Hamidah Abdul Rahman, 3. Ismail Abdul Latif, 4. Kok Yew Puah, 5. Long Thien Shih, 6. Nurwani Nawawi

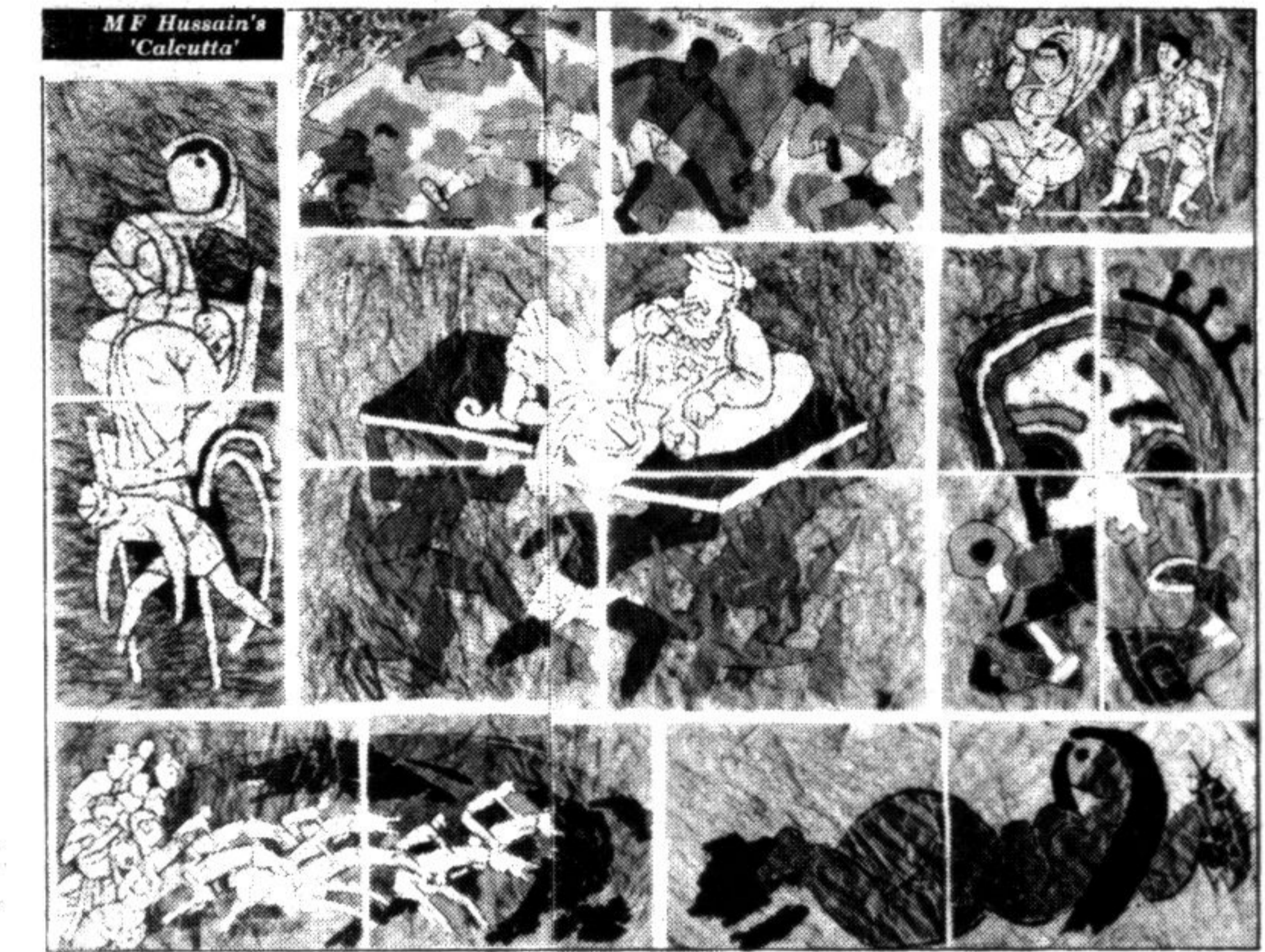
- PHILIPPINES**
1. Rolando L Yakit, 2. Nards Miranda, 3. Norman B Sustiguer, 4. Elmer B Garnale, 5. Andi Cubi, 6. Del Micor-Camins, 7. Gene De Loyola, 8. Rosario Charito Bitanga Peralta, 9. Felix Quiros Cachapero, 10. Dan Libor

- SAUDI ARABIA**
1. Abdullah A Al Sheikh, 2. Aly M Al Tokhis, 3. Fahad N Al Robeak, 4. Ihsan A Borhan, 5. Abdal Aziz Ashdur, 6. Abdullah Nawawi, 7. Yasser Azhar, 8. Ibraheem Boqus, 9. Ibraheem Al Negeather, 10. Ahmad A Abdifab Al Nabi, 11. Ibraheem Y Abdou, 12. Khalid N Alshu Ali, 13. Nasser Al-Refae

- SINGAPORE**
1. S Chandrasekaran, 2. Geh Ee Cho, 3. Lin Poh Tech, 4. Prabhakara Jimmy Quek, 5. Tang Mun Kit

- SRI LANKA**
1. N Senananda Indrajith, 2. Sudaih Samaraseker WP, 3. Griyanga Dekumpitiya, 4. M Lukdase Hemantha Abeywardena, 5. Saman Jayaratne, 6. Chamil Korishantha De Zoysa, 7. Kemanthi Gayathri Nandasaena, 8. Janath Prasanna Jayasuria, 9. S A N Dilini Parera, 10. Dharma D Kruppu, 11. D Chandrapala, 12. Vajira Priyantha Dias Gunawardena, 13. P Sunil Lakshman, 14. Isura Seneviratne, 15. Lionel Ranawera, 16. A Wimalasara, 17. T K Wasantha Gami Jayalath, 18. Obeyena Ranasinghe, 19. Somapala Jayakody, 20. ALD Sirisena, 21. P Sirmal Sanjeeva Kumara, 22. Chandanie Kumari Seerath Yapa, 23. Ranjith Dharmatilake, 24. Ishira A Kanathigoda

(Incomplete)



Statistical Information of Asian Art Biennales (1st to 6th)

Sl. No.	Name of Participating Countries	1st A/W	2nd A/W	3rd A/W	4th A/W	5th A/W	6th A/W
1.	Bahrain						8 15
2.	Bhutan	21	19				8 23
3.	China	15 15	30 30	26 26	35 36	33 40	10 10
4.	India	15 30	37 37	36 65	22 43		11 21
5.	Indonesia	30 40				6 13	NA
6.	Iran		31 46	22 28			3 35
7.	Iraq			2 19			2 5
8.	Japan	5 25	5 13	2 9	2 21	2 2	2 2
9.	Jordan						8 18
10.	Kazakhstan						NA
11.	Kuwait	8 8			19 24		2 18
12.	Laos						6 12
13.	Maldives				2 30		NA
14.	Malaysia	10 10	9 16	9 18	22 52		6 10
15.	Mongolia						NA
16.	Nepal	21 21	22 26		20 24	28 39	20 45
17.	Pakistan	20 22		15 32	8 41	3 29	5 24
18.	Philippines		6 14	12 15		8 12	10 27
19.	Qatar			8 9		3 8	NA
20.	Rep. Korea	18 18	16 32	13 26	15 15	12 12	17 17
21.	USSR		9 37	32 52	44 57	10 28	NA
22.	Saudi Arabia			12 12	10 10	11 15	13 22
23.	Singapore						5 10
24.	Sri Lanka	17 17	18 25	12 12	15 16		25 49
25.	Thailand	22 22			5 10		8 17
26.	Turkey		3 30	5 25	1 15		4 4
27.	Turkmenistan						NA
28.	Vietnam						13 30
29.	UAE						4 16
30.	Yemen A R						4 14
31.	Bangladesh	59 102	77 131	114 142	132 145	129 159	151 215
32.	D. P. R. Korea	17 19					NA
33.	Russian Federation					11 36	NA
		257 370	263 456	320 490	352 537	256 387	306+ 594+

A W — Artists Works NA — Not Available

Fifth November, the Guido Fawkes Day

Guido Fawkes Day

A Day of Revenge and Retribution

by Prof Roushanara Hoque

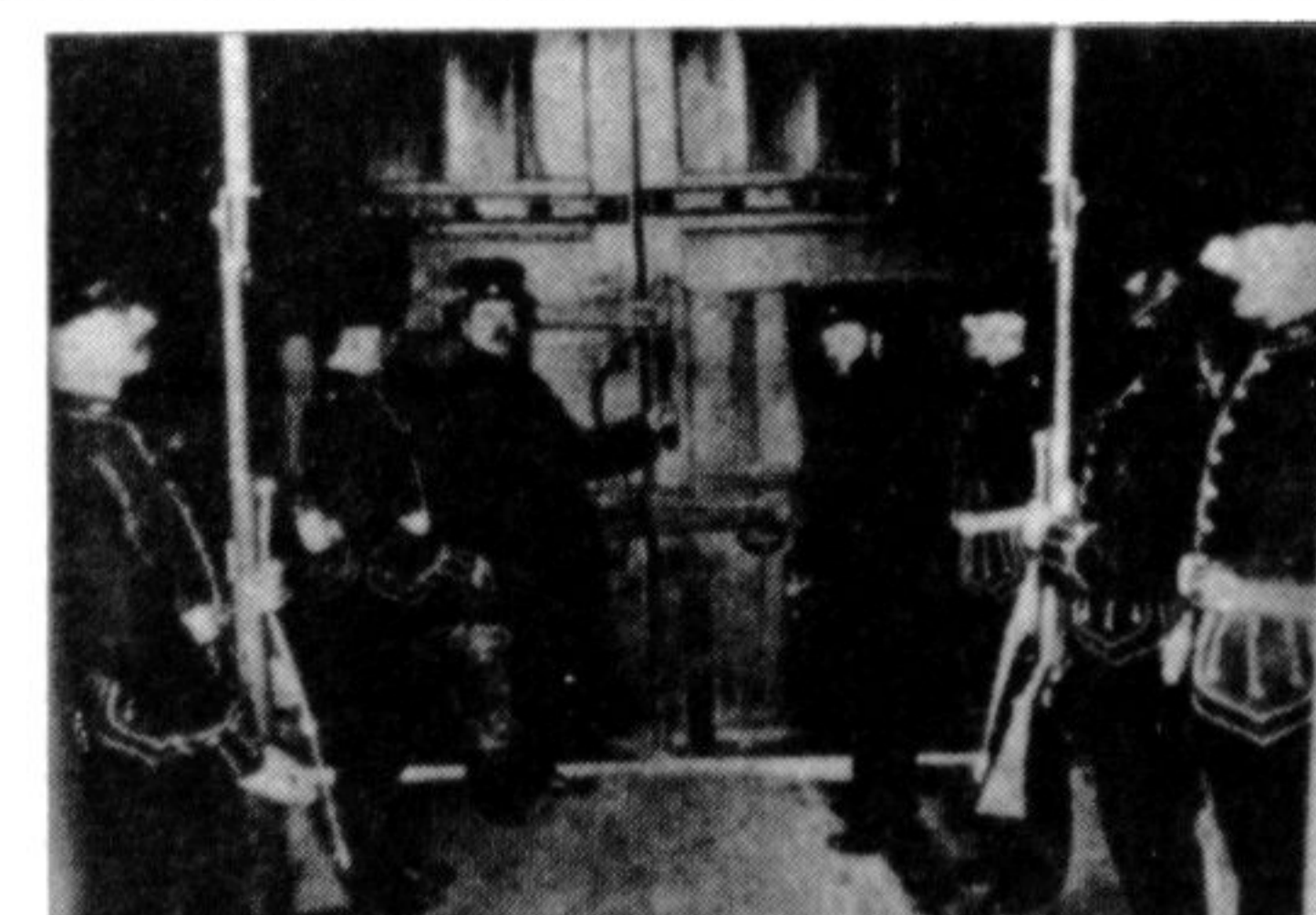
far, loud clapping and laughter.

The day begins with the children asking, "A penny for the Guf", to all the shoppers and pedestrians. With the money they make large effigies of Guido Fawkes, drag through the streets and in the evening put them on heaps of woods and packing boxes in every corner of the streets and light fire. They enjoy the mock revenge by fireworks amidst fun-

The historical background of the day is very tragic. Fifth November 1605 was the date of the first Opening of the Parliament by the Stuart King James I. Being unhappy with the occasion of a Protestant King, the Catholics conspired to take revenge by blowing up the Parliament when the King, the Lords and the Commons and the entire Government celebrities would be in session. They rented a house adjacent to the Westminster Palace at an exorbitant rent on the previous night and dug a tunnel through

the house to the basement of the Parliament, dug a hole just under the House of Lords, filled it with 36 barrels of gunpowder and Guido Fawkes remained stand-by with a match-stick in hand to light the explosives at the final signal of Lord Catsby, who stood near the door waiting for the arrival of the Royal Procession.

When the Procession came near the House of Lords, an anonymous letter was despatched to Lord Montigel warning him of the impending holocaust of the Parliament. He got dumb, for a moment thought of his own safety, but



Ten Yeoman Guards check the cellars of Parliament with lantern every year before its State Opening.

later on, being led by conscience, decided to save the valuable lives of the Royal en-

lourage at the cost of his own. He ran through the procession, stood at the front, crying, "Halt, Halt, for God's sake, halt! The procession stopped, he handed the letter to the Speaker who was surprised to read the content. The procession was thus saved by him.

The Yeoman Armed Guard of the Parliament searched the Palace, went to the basement through the tunnel and caught Guido Fawkes red-handed with his co-conspirator Lord Catsby, who was killed during his attempt to escape. Guido Fawkes was saved to face the retribution of the entire Catholic Community on whom the public wrath of vengeance fell. He was thrown into the torture chamber of the Tower of London. There in spite of extreme torture he did not divulge the names of his co-traitors. Then he was dragged through the streets of London with a rope by his neck and again thrown into the torture chamber of the Tower, and

repeatedly tortured with no success. Then he was hanged upside down on a tree by the side of the road and on the verge of his death he was compelled to sign a paper with the names of some suspected persons in that. He was then dragged to the guillotine and in the presence of thousands of cheering crowds the death sentence was executed on the poor dying Guido Fawkes.

The wrath of the anguished public was not mitigated as yet. The dead body of Guido Fawkes was cut into many pieces and putting on an open vehicle displayed through the streets of London as a deterrent to treachery. Since 1605, the 5th November is observed by the British teen agers as a day of fun. The elders neither support this vindictive game nor raise any voice against it. Ever since then, a detachment of ten

Yeoman Guards with lanterns have been ceremoniously checking the cellars of the Parliament every year before the State Opening, to ensure that no such plot is hatched again. During 1970 and onwards this search has acquired a real significance, due to the bombing campaign of the IRA and since then dogs, detectors and other modern devices have been brought in, to re-inforce the lanterns of the Yeoman Guards.

Therefore, the Fifth November, the Guido Fawkes Day was marked as the blackest day in the British Constitutional History.

The writer studied British Constitutional History in England.