

# 'Harmony of colours is fundamental to my composition'--Mansur Ul Karim

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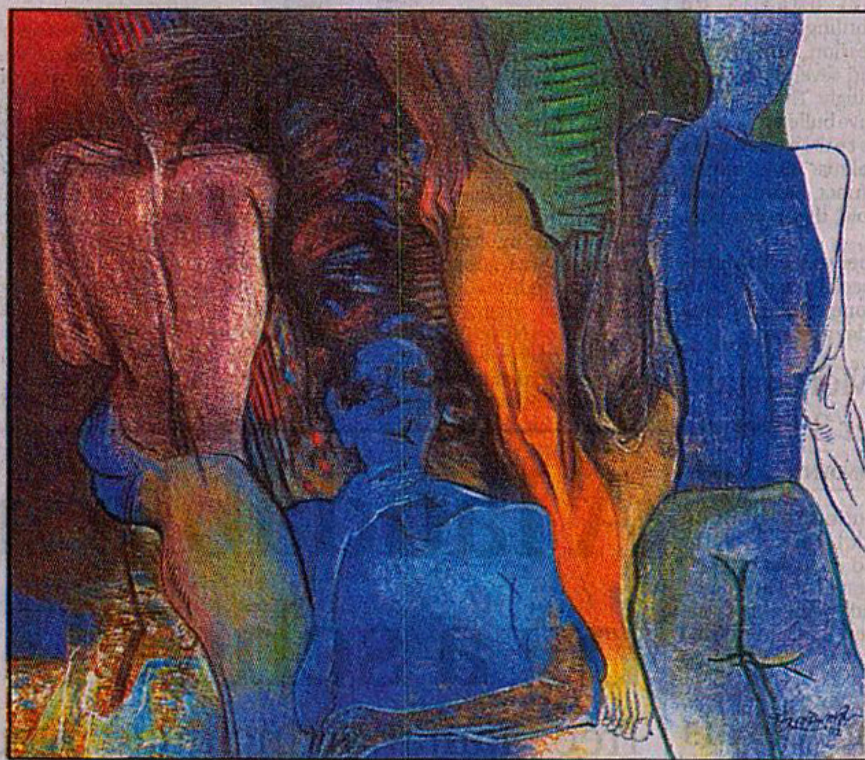
MANSUR Ul Karim's artistic perception has grown and developed over the years. The exceptional natural beauty and the life of the rural Bangladesh permeate his canvases. His bond with the humans and their surroundings shines through the predominant colours. Nature and humans intermingle to announce their interdependence and they seem inseparable in his works.

The paintings of Karim, a Professor of Fine Arts, at Chittagong University, are neither mere expression of love for nature, nor any subjective or metaphysical reflection on it. Nature is not even used as a mere background for the human figures in Karim's canvas. Inspired by 'A passionate sense of deep physical and spiritual bond that exists between nature and man', Karim strives to illustrate the truth in simple terms.

My works from the 1980s onward use bold lines, textural surface and economical use of colours, and human figures, birds, animals and what I call my 'organic forms' that crowd the intensely interactive space, says Karim. Initially he used to follow the common abstract mode, while playing along with the trend of the 1970s. But reflection of the sociopolitical turmoil of the time was a mainstay. 'A number of artists swerved from that trendy path in search of newer artistic means, as we were willing to confront the reality that we lived in,' says Karim.

Paintings took a new shape in the hands of these artists and Karim certainly played a pioneering role in the transformation of the abstractionists into exponents of social consciousness. They received a good grounding in abstraction, that is why their works combine the spontaneous embodiment of structures, colour plains with recognisable abstractionist elements. Karim, like his friends, started his career in the '70s and was inclined towards the abstract trend of the time. And then I came out of it, and went back to nature,' he asserts.

Harmony of colours, for Karim, is fundamental to his composition. Of men, women, and nature, the great unity that is expressed in subtle, deep, or even bright shades of colours, come together to form the final imagery. With the poetic play of scratched lines, his images



In Today's Context, Oil

are lent its most concrete element of all -- the suggestive humans and natural elements. He applies minute details in certain areas, adding to the atmospheric beauty.

Karim stresses that his female figures are the embodiment of nature. The main subject matter of his work is the rural scenery of hilly Chittagong, and he draws an analogy of those curvilinear landscapes with the female form, though a few male figures also surface in his paintings. Karim says, 'I always imagine the sky in multi colour. It has a great impact on my artistic work. The female form, sometimes alone sometimes in a group, as a rule, merges with the background that depicts nature.'

I have rediscovered the magic of light and shade. My palette has become sparse over the

years, but the principle of chiaroscuro--the way light and shade are shown, the contrast between light and shade--remains the same,' he adds.

Most of Karim's paintings are done in acrylic; some are even done in oil. His signature surfaces in his use of large, spatial colour fields marked by their contrasting shades. His recent works were done in two different series. Six of the paintings constitute the first series. Titled *The Six Seasons*, they exude visual energy. The rest of the paintings have no such theme to express, but also are related. The series is on our time, which he sees as 'arid, aimless, and oppressive.' The paintings have banished nature altogether; even in *The Six Seasons* series, nature is a mere suggestion, not shown in terms of

colours that are compatible with the mood of particular seasons. Colours used are bold and splashy -- but not in a celebratory sense. There is hardly any presence of nature in the rest of the works. Instead, figures occupy the central space; the strong use of color is something new for Karim and shows his penchant for innovation.

In the paintings where human figures are prominent, lines are minimised and figures are marked by a simplicity that allows for a direct interaction with the viewer. Karim has left a blank space in many of these paintings and painted the background white to 'see if the open space communicates his thoughts and feelings to the viewers.'

Done in 2003, these paintings describe the cruel turns of events and express the pains of living in these uncertain times.

In *The Freedom Fighters Now*, for example, the focus is on the plight of the freedom fighters. Their mutilated appearance emphasises their helplessness. Karim has especially concentrated on the eyes. The eyes of the human figures do not focus on any particular object or sight, but bear the lost looks of the denizens of a world devoid of humanity.

In *Those Seven*, all the figures slant in one direction, showing the oppression of uniformity. In another, which shows only human feet pointing endlessly at an uncertain destination, the main concern is the loss of direction in our times.

Mansur Ul Karim has never faced dejection in his more than three decades of artistic work. Karim says, 'I am always inspired by the work of painter Rashid Chowdhury, whom I consider my mentor. When I do not get any new idea, I take cues from his paintings. That is why I could go on for so many years without any interruption.'

Mansur Ul Karim has received many awards. Of those he considers as the most remarkable the Grand Award at the 8th Indian Triennial International, New Delhi organised by Lalit Kala Academy, India in 1994 and the Grand Award at the 6th Asian Art Biennale organised by Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy in 1993.

Moreover, he has taken part in many solo and group exhibitions at home and abroad.

## Jolbalika: Bringing the village to the stage

FAYZA HAQ

*Jolbalika* by Padatik, written by Masum Reza and directed by Shamsul Alam Bokul, focuses on rural Bangladesh. The play depicts the joys and sorrows of the rural people where the upper classes do not compromise with the lower ones in times of crises. The play also lays emphasis on the gender issue where a male child is given priority over a female one. When a storm faces Joy Baul, one of the main characters, it is his son that he saves from the waves rather than his daughter. Ghonoshyam, a mental patient, loved by the entire village, saves everyone but is himself bitten by a snake. An element of romance is brought in by the relationship between Chandbodon, the son of the village head, and Chumkibegum, Joy Baul's sister.

For 27 years the group has focused on village-based plays, although they have done other plays too such as *Maxim Gorky's Mother*, *Manusher Pala*, *Teen Rustomer Goppo*, *Shojonbaddhiyar Ghat* and *Chandraboli*.

Nurur Rahman Bachchu, assistant director, talking about the problems that confronted the group, said that that though the theme was village-based, some of the actors had never seen a village. To recreate the ambience of rural life was not easy, Nurur Rahman said.

Towards the latter half of the rehearsal, the members were compelled to practice for many hours every day. It was again not easy to bring the young ones on par with the mature actors, said Nurur. There are also the hard decisions that the characters have to take. These inner conflicts heighten the element of



A sequence from Jolbalika

tension in the play such as when Joy Baul has to choose between his son and his daughter.

Shamsul Alam Bokul, the director, said that he had to deal with the same handful of actors. As a consequence, he had no choice but to compromise in his selection of the same limited characters. 'It was a big challenge for me. I have not dealt with this theme before. I have done work on the Liberation Movement and translated Shakespeare plays. For this work I had to do research on my own on boat races and songs that accompany them,' he said.

Nasiruddin Sheikh, the music director, had to be careful about providing the tunes for the songs. He said that he had to keep the traditional songs in mind while catering for this play. 'The songs we've used are folk songs but they are not common,' Nasiruddin said.

Sabil Reza Chowdhury, who acted

as Ghonoshyam, said he had acted in *Shojonbaddhiyar Ghat*, *Khetmujur Khoimuddin* and others. He said that he worked all evening on the play after a long day's work as a banker. Nilmoht Aich, a teacher of English, said he acted as Joy Baul and this role was different from the ones he had done before in plays such as *Shojonbaddhiyar Ghat*. Farouk Prodhan acted as Gunin, the character who prophesies that flood waters will overwhelm the village. He had played a larger role in *Khetmujur Khoimuddin*. For Rokhsana Akhter, a student of class eight, this was her first play. She got all the family support as her father was also in the play.

For viewers, accustomed to theatre based on urban settings, *Jolbalika*, with its rural ambience, will prove a draw.

*Jolbalika* will be staged tomorrow (December 19) at the Experimental Theatre Stage, Shilpakala.

### CULTURAL FEAST

#### National Zainul Festival 2004

Occasion: 90th Birth Anniversary of Shilpakariya Zainul Abedin  
Organiser: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Bangladesh National Museum and Bangladesh Foundation  
Time: December 10-30  
Schedule:

December 12-January 07  
Special Exhibition of Zainul Abedin  
Time: 11am to 7pm on weekdays and 3:00pm to 8:00pm on Fridays  
Venue: Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts, 275/F, Road 27, Dhanmondi, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy and Bangladesh National Museum.

December 17-30  
Handicrafts Fair  
Time: From 11am to 7pm on weekdays and 3:00pm to 8:00pm on Fridays  
Venue: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy

December 22-24  
Folk Song Festival  
Time: Everyday at 6:00pm  
Venue: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy Premises

December 24  
Seminar on the life and works of Zainul Abedin  
Time: at 9:30am  
Venue: National Experimental Theatre Hall, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy

## Patha natok played an important role during our Liberation War

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

CULTURAL activists in our country played a major role during our Liberation War. A well-known case is the stellar contribution of the cultural activists at the Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra. Another popular medium, *patha natok* (street theatre), was also active at the grassroots level in the Independence struggle.

To generate awareness on social issues among the audience through some explicit messages, *patha natok* has been practised in Bangladesh and other parts of the world for many years. During the Pakistani period, as full-fledged theatre was still nascent in Bangladesh, drama devotees basically staged *patha natok*. Their aim was to rouse public opinion against the oppression of the then Pakistani regime. As their aim was to grow awareness, the diction of the *patha natok* was easy and communicative.

*Patha natok* practice in those days was not organisation-based, rather it was centred on a few people.



Young theatre activists present a street play

Mannan Heera, the current President of Bangladesh Patha Natok Parishad (BNPP), says, '*Patha natok* practice in those days was Dhaka

University-based. Muneir Chowdhury, Hasan Imam, Kamal Lohani, Ramendu Majumdar and others were the pioneers in organis-

ing and staging street plays. Muneir Chowdhury's play *Kabor* was a sharp weapon against the Pakistani regime.'

From 1969, this genre of theatre, along with *Gono Sangeet* (songs of the masses), became a powerful tool against the oppression of the Pakistani regime. *Patha natok* in those days basically dealt with some important political issues, which motivated the students as well as the common people to march for the Independence. And from the late '70s, Mannan says, 'Cultural activists of Dhaka and Chittagong regularly staged *patha natok* on trucks, which ultimately became a process of recruiting freedom fighters in 1971.'

In the refugee camps, cultural activists regularly staged *patha natok* to encourage the frontline fighters for the Liberation War.

Even today the performing art of *patha natok* has a universal appeal. It is staged regularly in the open air to protest against evil as well as to enable people to fight for their rights.

## VICTORY DAY CELEBRATIONS IN THE CITY

December 16, the Victory Day of the nation, is one of the occasions in the prying city life when city dwellers get spirited with patriotism. On this auspicious day, the whole Dhaka city turns into a melting pot of cultural activities celebrating the day as well as paying homage to the martyrs of the Liberation War.

This year, also, the scene was not different. The Central Shaheed Minar was the epicentre of the celebration as usual. The whole Dhaka University campus literally turned into a human ocean; people from all walks of life carrying flags



and colourful balloons gave it a real carnival look.

The Bangla Academy, TSC premises, Bakultala of Institute of Fine Arts, Shishu Academy, Public Library, Kazi Nazrul Islam's grave, Ramna premises, Liberation War Museum, Shilpakala Academy, Rabindra Sarovar Amphitheatre, Martyred Intellectuals Memorial premises at Rayerbazar--each and every corner of the city dazzled with cultural functions: from patriotic songs to modern band music, from street plays to group dances.

PHOTO: AFSAR AHMED

## TV GUIDE

All programmes are in local time. The Daily Star will not be responsible for any change in the programme.

### News Bulletin

**BTV**  
News Headlines (Bangla) at 8:55 am, 12:10 pm, 2:00 pm, 3:30 pm, 4:55 pm, 7:00 pm.  
News (English) at 8:00 am, 1:00 pm, 5:00 pm, 8:00 pm.

News (English) at 3:00 pm, 10:00 pm.  
Late Night News (Bangla and English) 11:30 pm.

**CHANNEL-1**  
News (Bangla) at 7:15 am, 9:00am, 7:15 pm, 9:00pm, 10:30, 12:15 am.  
Telecast of BTV news (Bangla and English) at 11:30 pm.

**ATN BANGLA**  
News (Bangla) at 7:00 am, 10:00am, 2:00 pm, 7:00 pm, 10:00 pm, 11:00 pm.  
Telecast of BTV News (Bangla and English) at 11:30 pm.

**ntv**  
News Headlines (Bangla) at 10:00 am, 12:00 am, 6:15 pm, 9:30 pm.  
News (Bangla) 7:30 am, 2:00 pm, 5:00 pm, 7:30 pm, 10:30 pm.

**TARA BANGLA**  
News Headlines (Bangla) at 5:30 pm, 7:30 pm.  
Tara News (Bangla) at 8:30 pm, 11:30 pm.  
Tara News Bangladesh (Bangla) at 9:30 pm.

**BBC WORLD**  
Every hour on the hour

**BTV**  
08:15 Smriti Archives  
08:40 Asia in this Week  
09:05 Special Programme  
09:15 Live telecast of 2nd test match between Bangladesh and India  
09:30 Bangladesh Feature Film  
09:40 Dush Janpad  
07:30 Special Programme  
08:30 Dekha Adekha  
09:00 Geelmo Smriti  
10:30 Lal Golap  
12:05 Satellite programmes

**CHANNEL-1**  
09:45 Trilipi Matra  
10:30 Na Bola Kotha  
12:00 Chitli Pelam  
12:30 Aaj Dupure  
01:00 Ebon Cinema Gaan  
01:30 Bangla Film  
03:40 Bangla Gaan  
04:15 Dekhar Gaan Shonar Gaan  
04:45 Sa Re Ga Ma  
05:15 Janopader Khabar  
05:30 Cine music  
06:00 Music Plus  
06:30 Ekjon Mastan O Ekti Meya  
07:50 Drama: Dr. Mahabater Swapno  
09:35 Hridoye Mati O Manush  
10:00 Drama Serial: Banchey Je Ki Shukhi

**ATN BANGLA**  
10:25 Anandisheete  
11:05 Islamic Programme  
03:40 Binodon Jummabar  
05:10 Shesh Akhar  
06:20 Rup Madhuri  
08:00 Drama Serial: Khawab  
08:30 Drama Serial: Lal Neel Beguni  
09:00 Drama Serial: Ek Jenome  
09:30 Drama Serial: Ek Jenome  
10:35 Cine Aha

**ntv**  
08:00 Aajker Shakal  
09:20 Amra Akhon Unish, Kuri  
10:30 Dhakar Cinema  
02:30 Ure Jay Bakpochhi  
03:15 Pepsi Music Express  
03:40 Drama: Sujata  
04:25 Sports World  
05:15 Iltashar Ei Diney  
05:20 Alokat  
06:20 Shubho Shondhya  
06:55 Shangshikri Ei Shoptaho  
08:15 Drama Serial: Jhut Jhamela  
08:50 Tele Film: Kufa  
11:25 Dindarpan

**HBO**  
6:30 Beethoven's 4th  
10:30 The Muse  
12:30 Carnivale 11: Day of the Dead  
1:45 Paper Soldiers  
3:30 King Kong Lives  
5:45 Osmosis Jones  
7:45 Men in Black II  
9:30 Enough  
11:45 Most Wanted  
1:45 Sneakers  
4:15 King Kong Lives

**STAR MOVIES**  
7:45 Santa Clause The Movie  
9:30 Wrong Turn  
11:00 Heathers  
12:45 In-Laws The Movie  
2:30 Hollywood One On One  
3:00 Holes  
5:00 Courage Under Fire  
7:00 Shanghai Knights  
8:55 8mm  
11:00 Heathers  
12:45 Leo

**STAR GOLD**  
9:45 Chorus  
1:30 Do Aur Do Paanch

### Kufa

On ntv at 8:50 pm  
Genre: Tele-film  
Cast: Amrul Haque Chowdhury, Dilara Zaman, Azad Abul Kalam  
Screen playwright and director: Animesh Aich

Kufa, a daily-life word, means omen. In the tele film *Kufa*, a poor fellow named Nital is known as 'Kufa Nital', as evil is always associated with him. The inhabitants of a remote village called Rajihara are prejudiced about him. Despite a few of his well-wishers want a change, people's approach to him remains the same. When the inhabitants treat him as a witch and want to burn him alive, Nital escapes from his birthplace.

### PICK OF THE DAY



4:45 Muthu Maharaja  
8:30 Hogi Pyar Ki Jeet  
12:00 Ankhon Mein Tum Ho  
12:30 Hil Filmn Hil  
1:00 Star Beshbellers  
2:05 Hil Filmn Hil  
2:30 Mirch Masala  
3:00 Musafir Hoon Yaaron  
3:30 Umar 55 Ki Di Bachpan Ka  
7:00 Yatra  
7:30 Piya Bina  
8:00 Pardey Ke Peechay  
8:30 Main Hoon Na  
12:00 Yatra  
12:30 Rendezvous With

1:00 Simi Garewal  
1:30 Travel Asia  
2:00 The Kids From Room  
2:30 Roborach  
3:00 Monster Farm  
3:30 Inspector Gadget  
4:00 The Kumars At No. 42  
4:30 Cops  
5:00 Koffee With Karan  
5:30 Britannia India's Child  
6:30 Genius  
7:30 The X-Files  
8:00 Stupid Behavior  
8:30 Caught On Tape  
9:00 When Hidden  
9:30 Cameras Attack  
10:30 Tna Wrestling  
11:00 Mutant X  
11:30 Coupling  
12:00 Absolute Power  
12:30 Baywatch Hawaii

**ANIMAL PLANET**  
11:30 Deep Into The Wild  
12:00 Deep Into The Wild Costa Rica  
12:30 Nightmares of Nature  
1:00 Nightmares of Nature  
1:30 Barking Mad  
2:00 Aussie Animal Rescue 2  
2:30 Marine Rescue  
3:00 Life Of Birds: The Masters of Flight  
3:30 Wildlife Specials  
4:00 Crocodile  
4:30 Wild Encounters Natural Great Events Great Hunts  
5:00 Inside The Britannic  
5:30 National Geographic  
6:00 Special  
6:30 Truth Files  
6:55 Pakistan Tour Of

**DISCOVERY CHANNEL**  
10:30 Impact Stories of Survival  
11:00 Impact Episode 1  
11:30 Crime Night Scene  
Clean-UP 2 (W)

**NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC**  
12:00 Hayden Turner's Wildlife  
12:30 Cyber War - To Catch A Little Fish  
1:00 Mummy Road Show  
1:30 Riddles Of The Dead S2  
2:00 On Assignment  
2:30 Planet Wild  
3:00 \$100 Taxi Ride  
3:30 Game For It  
4:00 People Out There  
4:30 \$100 Taxi Ride  
5:00 Game For It  
5:30 Ng Special  
6:00 Inside The Britannic  
6:30 National Geographic  
7:00 Special  
7:30 Truth Files  
8:00 Pakistan Tour Of

**ESPN**  
9:00 Taking Guard  
9:30 Chittagong Bangladesh  
10:00 Bangladesh Vs India 2nd Test Day 3 Preview(L)  
10:30 Bangladesh Bangladesh  
11:00 Bangladesh Vs India 2nd Test Day 3  
11:30 Sportscenter Weekend  
12:00 Epi Saturday  
12:30 English Premier Football  
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**TEN SPORTS**  
8:00 Gamer TV  
9:00 WWE: Velocity  
9:30 Speed  
10:00 Winning Post  
11:00 Trans World Sports  
12:00 German League  
1:00 Bayern Munich v Stuttgart  
2:00 2004 Nelson Mandela  
3:00 Golf Invitational  
4:00 Italian Serie A - Highlights  
5:00 ICC Cricket World  
6:00 Sportswatch  
7:00 Winning Post  
8:00 Gamer TV  
9:00 WWE: Experience  
10:00 Speed: Indian Golf Show  
11:00 UEFA Cup Extra  
12:00 Magazine Show  
13:00 Trans World Sports  
14:00 Gilette World Sport  
15:00 MRF India Rally 2004  
16:00 FIA Asia Pacific Rally  
17:00 Winning Post  
18:00 ATP Tennis  
19:00 WWE: Experience  
20:00 Trans World Sports